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# **NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL**

**MONTEREY, CALIFORNIA**

## **THESIS**

### **INTERNATIONAL POLITICS OF THE REINCARNATION OF THE DALAI LAMA**

by

Mashbat Otgonbayar Sarlagtay

June, 2007

Thesis Advisor:

Alice Lyman Miller

Co-Advisor:

Christopher Twomey

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**INTERNATIONAL POLITICS OF THE REINCARNATION OF THE DALAI  
LAMA**

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requirements for the degree of

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from the

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## **ABSTRACT**

This thesis analyzes Mongolia's strategic options in the event of a Mongol-Chinese confrontation over a clash of interests arising from the potential succession of the next Dalai Lama, understood in Mongolia religiously through a process of reincarnation. Mongolia would welcome the Dalai Lama's reincarnation in the country since Tibetan Buddhism enjoys the allegiance of many of Mongolia's people and is a part of Mongolia's national identity. Mongolia's democratic government in Ulaanbaatar must therefore respond to its people's religious sentiments. Theoretical considerations regarding the rational behavior of small powers suggest that Mongolia would likely seek to maximize its interest by manipulating the interests of great powers to balance against China. Insight into Ulaanbaatar's dilemma in such a circumstance may be gained from the current cross-Strait politics regarding the Taiwan independence issue, in which voter preferences favor Taiwan's independence and lead it to balance with the United States against China's growing military power. This thesis argues that even though Beijing is unlikely to threaten Mongolia with military power since such steps would negatively affect its relation with Moscow and its reputation among the international community, it could nevertheless exert pressure on Ulaanbaatar. In such a circumstance, American, Russian, and Indian support for Mongolia would be crucial to countering Beijing.



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# **I. INTRODUCTION**

## **A. THE ISSUE AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE**

This thesis studies the importance of religious identity in Central Asian international politics through consideration of an interesting and important possibility: the reincarnation of the Fifteenth Dalai Lama in Mongolia. Religion is an important component of ethnic identity in the Central Asian regions of Mongolia, Tibet and Manchuria. In many cases, such ethnic identity exists in the context of imperfect and evolving democratization, contested definitions of nationalism, and conflicts over sovereignty as well as international politics. This thesis uses both comparative case studies (of Taiwanese nationalism in a similar geo-strategic context) and a hypothetical crisis (succession of the Dalai Lama) to investigate these interrelated issues.

The Dalai Lama is the former king of Tibet and head of its government-in-exile. He is simultaneously the leader of Tibetan Buddhism (Lamaism) and the religious leader of most Mongolians. China considers the Dalai Lama a threat to its national integrity because he is the leader of the Tibetan government-in-exile and proposes to separate Tibet from China's sovereignty. China's interest in Tibet has a long history. During the Qing Empire, which existed until the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, China consisted of China proper, Tibet, Xinjiang, Outer and Inner Mongolia, and Manchuria. These regions (excluding Outer Mongolia, but including Inner Mongolia) now account for two-thirds of China's current territory. In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, British, Russian, and Japanese interests impinged upon Chinese sovereignty in this broad region. After the 1911 Revolution in China, Mongolia and Tibet declared their independence from it. Only Outer Mongolia, which had close cultural and religious ties with Tibet, succeeded.

The region still presents potential threats to Chinese integrity. Author Zhao Shuisheng notes that "ethnic nationalism among Tibetans, Uyghurs, other Muslims and Mongols has stayed alive and has been evident in the upsurge of separatist demonstrations and movements in Tibet, Inner Mongolia, and Xinjiang in the 1990's."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Shuisheng Zhao, "Chinese Nationalism and Its International Orientations" *Political Science Quarterly*, vol. 115, no.1, (Spring 2000) 27.

The Tibetan government-in-exile still actively functions in Dharmasala, India, under the leadership of the Dalai Lama. The Muslim Uyghur separatist movement in Xinjiang has allegedly had contact with the former Taliban government of Afghanistan.<sup>2</sup> Ethnic minorities espousing different religions in China's western regions potentially constitute the same threat to Chinese integrity as Taiwanese independence currently does.

The succession to the Tibetan throne is one of the key factors that shape the future of the Tibetan people. According to Lamaist belief, the 72-year-old Dalai Lama will continue to rule Tibet after his death, with his next reincarnation. "Reincarnation is used as a principle of succession," author Melvyn C. Goldstein notes, and "legitimization of the individual selected as the incarnation is of critical importance to the successful operation of the system."<sup>3</sup>

In this context, the possible reincarnation of the Dalai Lama in Mongolia would challenge the Mongol-Chinese relationship. The Tibetan government-in-exile would continue to contest China's sovereignty in Tibet, using religion as an instrument. In addition, a Mongol Dalai Lama would likely enjoy popular support not only from Tibet and (Outer) Mongolia, but also from Inner Mongolia. Such a succession would challenge China's policy toward Mongolia, and have an impact on China's approach to the broader Asian region.

Reincarnation of the Dalai Lama in Mongolia is not a certainty; however, it is a plausible, or even likely, given three significant factors. First, it is important to examine the late Dalai Lama's speeches and comments, as Goldstein states, "for possible clues as to where he would be born."<sup>4</sup> There is a particular commitment by the current Dalai Lama that he will reincarnate in a democratic country.<sup>5</sup> Mongolia is considered one of the successful post-communist democracies. Second, it is a historical fact that the only Dalai

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<sup>2</sup> Kerry Dumbaugh, "China -U.S. Relations: Current Issues and Implications for U.S. Policy," *CRS Report for Congress*, September 22, 2006, 23. Dumbaugh noted that "approximately 22 Uighur Muslims were being held by U.S. forces at Guantanamo Bay" after the U.S. military operation in Afghanistan. They were later released because U.S. forces considered them of "no intelligence value."

<sup>3</sup> Melvin C. Goldstein, "The Circulation of Estates in Tibet: Reincarnation, Land and Politics," *Journal of Asian Studies*, vol. 32, no. 3, (May 1973), 446.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 446.

<sup>5</sup> "Dalai's reincarnation will not be found under Chinese Control, *Indian Express*, <http://www.tibet.com/DL/next-reincarnation.html> (accessed on July 17, 2006).

Lama to reincarnate outside of Tibet was a Mongolian in the 16th century. Third, Mongolian Buddhists have always maintained good relations with the current Dalai Lama, even under Mongolia's former communist regime. In addition, Mongolia is the only independent nation among the three historically Lamaist societies, the others being Manchuria and Tibet itself.

Several important external and internal variables would shape Ulaanbaatar's policy in the event of the Dalai Lama's reincarnation in Mongolia. The most crucial internal factor would be a potential Buddhist resurgence in Mongolia. The most important external factors would be the implications for Beijing, which takes an active interest in religious salience in Mongolia, as it could affect Tibet and Mongolian diaspora in Inner Mongolia as well. Other critical variables would include U.S., Indian and Russian interests.

Mongolian policy-makers would face serious dilemmas as a consequence of the Dalai Lama's reincarnation in Mongolia. The country has been on a path towards democratization since the 1990's, and politicians must address the interests of their constituencies. Will the politicians respond to the religious pressures of the Mongolian people in opposition to pressures from Beijing? Or, will they concede to China and sacrifice Mongolia's traditional religious ties with Tibet for the sake of the nation's security, thus putting their political careers at risk? These are the main questions of this thesis.

This scenario has parallels with the issue of Taiwanese independence, which are manifest in both internal and external factors...Domestic factors include voters' preferences and the polarization of political parties. External factors include China's military threat, Sino-Taiwanese economic interdependence, and the ambiguous U.S. promise to counter China's threat. The people of Taiwan have repeatedly elected a pro-independence president since 2000; however, Beijing's threat against separatism plays the most important conditional factor for these policy matters. Externally, Taiwan is gradually maximizing its independence claim by manipulating U.S. security interests. These factors all contribute to an excellent case study of what would likely happen in Ulaanbaatar in the event of a Mongol-Chinese clash of interests.



Mongolia's current "third neighbor" policy reflects its ambition to maximize its national interests by balancing a powerful "third" actor against its two immediate neighbors, Russia and China. So far, the "third neighbor" policy has been well implemented. Mongolia's military deployment in Iraq, regardless of its neighbors' reservations about U.S. policy, is one successful departure from this policy. But such a policy would face a serious challenge in the case of the Dalai Lama's reincarnation in Mongolia, which would directly affect China's security interests. Mongolia, unlike Taiwan, is recognized by the PRC as an independent nation. Beijing is therefore not likely to invade Mongolia with its superior military power since it would violate the fundamental principle of its foreign policy – respecting national sovereignty – which Beijing also employs in resisting U.S. pressures on China itself. The best option for Beijing would be cooperation with Mongolia's anti-Dalai Lama parties to deter growing religious sentiment in Mongolia.

The conclusion of this thesis is that Mongolia would try to maximize its interest by acceding to voters' religious preferences, but be limited by the national security threat from China. Ulaanbaatar will aim to balance U.S. and Indian interests against China's. Such maximization, however, cannot extend beyond the interests of its neighbors. The theoretical studies of this thesis therefore examine the relationship between great and small powers and the strategies of small powers.

The simplest way for Mongolia to avoid the dilemma is to engage the traditional Mongolian religious leader, Ninth Khalkha Jebtsundampa Bogd Gegeen, in decision-making on religious issues, including the question of whether to recognize the next Dalai Lama's reincarnation. This course would help Ulaanbaatar to assuage the Mongolian electorate's religious sentiments, while remaining neutral in religious affairs and avoiding a political confrontation with Beijing.

This thesis will present policy options of practical use to Mongolian policy-makers. The issue is also of interest to the United States, India and China; this thesis could help the countries to plan and adapt their policy response.

## B. DISCUSSION AND LITERATURE REVIEW

### 1. Background

The role of Buddhism in Mongolian history and Mongolian ties to Tibet are controversial. Basic discussions of this topic consider social and cultural effects of Buddhism throughout the history of Mongolia and historical evaluation of political intentions behind the introduction, conversion to, and practice of Buddhism.

Some argue that Mongolia's conversion to Buddhism was not the result of foreign initiative. Jagchid Sechin notes that Mongol-Tibetan Buddhist relations began well before the foundation of the Manchu Qing Dynasty in the early 17th century. According to Sechin, conversion to Buddhism was a "progressive adaptation necessary for successful adjusting to the modern world."<sup>6</sup> Robert Rupin supports this argument, observing that Mongolian nationalism in the early 20th century was "inseparable from Buddhism."<sup>7</sup>

Guiseppe Tucci has argued that during the Mongol Yuan dynasty of the 13th and 14th centuries, Mongolians used Buddhism to intervene in Tibetan affairs and promote colonization. In the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17th centuries, the Dalai Lama's religious dominance in Tibet relied heavily on Mongolian military intervention in Tibet's internal religious rivalries.<sup>8</sup> Similarly, the Manchus used Lamaism to control both Mongolia and Tibet. Walter Heissig asserts that Buddhism was promoted by the Manchus to rule Mongolia, but he remarks that the religion had a positive impact on Mongolian social life.<sup>9</sup>

Alan Sanders does not agree that Buddhism had a positive impact on Mongolian social life. Early twentieth century statistics show that a significant number of the population, especially males, were lamas. This had a tremendous negative impact on social life, absorbing labor from the economy and slowing the pace of modernization. Sanders cites a number of statistics that Russian researchers and explorers I. Ovdienko,

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<sup>6</sup> Jagchid Sechin, *Mongolia's Culture and Society* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1979), 177.

<sup>7</sup> Robert Rupin, *How Mongolia Is Really Ruled: A Political History of the People's Republic of Mongolia 1900-1978* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1979), 12. R. L. Worden, A. M. Savada, and H. Lohninger ed., *Mongolia: Library of Congress Country Studies*, (Epina Software Lab, 2004), [http://www.photoglobe.info/ebooks/mongolia/cstudies\\_mongolia\\_0075.html](http://www.photoglobe.info/ebooks/mongolia/cstudies_mongolia_0075.html) (accessed June 5, 2007).

<sup>8</sup> Giuseppe Tucci, *The Religion of Tibet* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1980), 40-41.

<sup>9</sup> Walther Heissig, *The Religion of Mongolia* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1980), 33.

I. Mayskiy, V. Maslennikov and others produced during their expeditions to early Mongolia.<sup>10</sup> According to Sanders, this was the result of a deliberate policy of Manchu and Tibetan lamas to prevent a Mongolian insurgency against the Manchu Qing Dynasty. In the 20th century, the socialist literature of the Mongolian People's Republic (MPR) supported this idea to undercut Buddhism's role in Mongolia.

Mongolia, Tibet and Manchuria had strong strong religious ties. The balance of power between the three peoples and their policies toward each other were strongly shaped by the common religious allegiance they shared -- Lamaism. Once the Manchu Qing Dynasty collapsed in 1912, the Lamaist tripolar system fell with it, and a bipolar tie between Mongolia and Tibet resulted. However, events such as the communist revolution in Mongolia and the Chinese invasion of Tibet in 20th century ended the bipolar relationship.

## **2. Reincarnation and Politics**

Because there is no exact rule to determine the reincarnation, except for the secret knowledge derived from the art of divination, politics can play a role in the process..

The Karmapa sect of Tibetan Buddhism was the first to use the process of reincarnation to solidify its position. Soon thereafter, other sects began to practice this concept and to incarnate their own lamas. Since the 12th century, the leadership of all of the major sects have determined succession through incarnation. Franz Michael classified the roles of reincarnation of lamas into three categories: Dalai Lama himself, the leaders of major sects, and the leader of the monasteries.<sup>11</sup>

Tsung-Lien Shen and Shen-Chi Liu recorded the most detailed process of recognition of the next Dalai Lama reincarnation during the Manchu Qing Empire. Guided by the prophecy of the previous Dalai Lama or by the instruction of the highest monks, who were the only individuals who could read the signs of rebirth, several scouting teams would go on a mission to search for the reincarnated Dalai Lama. These scouting teams would name candidates for the reincarnated Dalai Lama based on their

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<sup>10</sup> Alan J. Sanders, *The People's Republic of Mongolia* (London: Oxford University Press, 1968), 66.

<sup>11</sup> Franz Michael, *Rule by Incarnation: Tibetan Buddhism and Its Role in Society and State* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1982), 43.

findings and bring them to Lhasa. After special praying rituals, the Manchu governor, appointed by the Manchu Qing emperor, who was also widely believed to be an incarnation of Lord Manchushir, chose one candidate's name from rolled papers. This selection process of the next Dalai Lama during the Qing Dynasty (1644-1912), by the decree of the Qianlong Emperor, resembled a lottery.<sup>12</sup>

In other instances, one of the candidates clearly showed credible signs of being the reincarnated Dalai Lama and was therefore chosen as the successor unanimously by all of the lamas. This was the case with both the present Dalai Lama and his predecessor.<sup>13</sup>

Along with the art of divination, politics has always had a place in the selection process. As Franz Michael notes:

It was in that order that a new concept of highest religious leadership, as well as of political authority, was introduced: the concept of the incarnation of a religious leader as a living bodhisattva.<sup>14</sup>

The historical evidence supporting this point is quite credible. During the Qing Dynasty, the Emperor was a patron of Lamaism and was able to rule incarnation without any knowledge of the art of divination, to restrict rebirth not to those from “powerful noble families, but always from humble stock.”<sup>15</sup> The last two Dalai Lamas' incarnations have been recognized without drawing lots, which seems to have had the political purpose of circumventing Chins's interference in the Dalai Lama recognition after the collapse of Manchu Qing Dynasty.

Most scholars agree that the identification of the Fourth Dalai Lama's incarnation in Mongolia in the late 16th century was clearly politically motivated “to secure Mongol support”<sup>16</sup> against rival sects in Tibet. The Third Dalai Lama went to Mongolia to appeal

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<sup>12</sup> Tsung-Lien Shen and Shen-Chi Liu, *Tibet and Tibetan* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1953), 89-101.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 101.

<sup>14</sup> Michael, 37.

<sup>15</sup> Shen and Liu, 101.

<sup>16</sup> Michael, 41.

for support and then died there eight years later.<sup>17</sup> The Fourth Dalai Lama, a Mongolian, was the only foreign incarnation among the Dalai Lama's fourteen incarnations.

Historians agree that reincarnation has always mixed international politics with domestic politics. As discussed earlier, it was instituted to strengthen a particular sect's position. The case of the Qianlong Emperor's decree showed direct political interference in the recognition of the next incarnation. The fact that the Fourth Dalai Lama was the only foreign lama demonstrates not only a deep religious association between the two peoples, but also the political nature of the reincarnation itself.

### **3. Buddhism in Mongolian Foreign Politics**

Researchers have studied the cultural aspects of Mongolian foreign policy from different points of view, though not necessarily in contradiction with one another. Generally, four different perspectives have emerged in the field.

Judith Nordby suggests that Mongolia used Buddhism as a way to reach out to the Third World, even during the communist regime.<sup>18</sup> Robert Rupin specifically cites the Asian Buddhist Peace Conference in 1970, which addressed the Dalai Lama issue and Chinese policy toward Tibet; however, he hesitates to offer any explicit conclusion.<sup>19</sup> Even though lamaism was strongly suppressed in socialist Mongolia, the government nevertheless invited the Dalai Lama, who visited the Mongolian People's Republic in 1979 and 1982. It was perhaps the result of an effort by an individual leader of Mongolian Lamaism to survive the oppressive regime using its own communist ideology of proletarian internationalism.

Post-communist Mongolian foreign policy studies are radically different with respect to the impact of culture, reflecting the situation since the Soviet and communist bloc collapsed. National interests now determine Mongolian foreign policy. Geopolitically, Mongolia's location, history and strategic context challenge its survival as

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<sup>17</sup> Tieh-Tseng Li, *The Historical Status of Tibet* (New York: King's Crown Press, 1956), 31.

<sup>18</sup> Judith Nordby, "The Mongolian People's Republic in 1980's: Continuity and Changes," in *Communism and Reform in East Asia*, ed. David Goodman (London Totowa: Frank Cass), 126.

<sup>19</sup> Rupin, 19.

an independent nation. Many researchers therefore raise questions about the problem of identity or national and cultural self-consciousness in Mongolia.

Tom Ginsburg has developed the idea of “cosmopolitan nationalism” to explain Mongolians’ attitude toward foreign policy. He understands “cosmopolitan nationalism” as “the affinity between nationalist goals and internationalist ideology,” which has “produced a configuration of ideas and rhetoric among the elite.”<sup>20</sup> Origins of the phenomenon are culturally rooted in conflict between settled and nomadic cultures. Ginsburg agrees with Lattimore that Mongolian nationalism is based on the traditional fear of Chinese settlement on the best part of Mongolian territory and displacement of nomadic Mongolians, which would crush its culture and way of life--a fate that was given to American Indians.<sup>21</sup> Therefore:

The deep cultural drive to distinguish themselves from the Chinese ensures that Mongolian nationalism is always perfectly consistent with internationalism, as long as internationalism offers hopes of a security guarantee vis-a-vis China.<sup>22</sup>

Ginsburg further analyzes how this nationalism pushed the country towards an alliance with the Soviets and how it finds its expression in current Mongolian political life. A “third neighbor” policy, which is the practical policy consequence of cosmopolitan nationalism, finds expression of the national drive to overcome Mongolia’s disadvantageous landlocked geopolitical position and to balance or neutralize the influence of its bigger neighbors.<sup>23</sup>

In his book *Mongolia’s Foreign Policy in the 1990’s: New Identity and New Challenges*, Professor Batbayar Tsedendamba finds Mongolia facing a different cultural dilemma in regard to its geopolitical location between Central Asia and East Asia.<sup>24</sup> He points out that Lamaist relations between Mongolia and Tibet pose a “risk factor” that

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<sup>20</sup> Thomas Ginsburg, “Nationalism, Elites and Mongolia’s Rapid Transition,” in *Mongolia and XX Century: Landlocked Cosmopolitans*, ed. Stephen Kotkin (New York and London: M.E.Sharpe, 1999), 248-249.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 249.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 249.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 254-256.

<sup>24</sup> Batbayar Tsedendamba, “Mongolia’s Foreign Policy in the 1990’s: New Identity and New Challenges,” *Regional Security Issues and Mongolia*. vol.17, (2002) 148-150.

might affect Mongol-Chinese relations, which he defines as a pillar of national stability. Bilateral relations were “negatively affected” by every visit of the Dalai Lama, and the government of Mongolia had to address Beijing about the religious freedom of its people. Tsedendamba blames the Dalai Lama for using religion for his own political purpose. An example of the Dalai Lama’s attempt to use religion “in his political game against Beijing and reassert his influence in Mongolia” is the Ninth Jebtsundampa. The Ninth Jebtsundampa is the reincarnation of the last religious leader and king of the Bogd Khan Kingdom of Mongolia. He declared the country’s independence from the Manchu Qing Dynasty on December 30, 1911. The Ninth Jebtsundampa was enthroned as a Mongolian religious leader by the Dalai Lama in 1991 and by Mongolian religious leaders in 1999 during his the only visit to Mongolia.<sup>25</sup> However, Batbayar does not explain how the Lamaist relationship between Mongolia and Tibet, including all of the Living Buddhas, can negatively affect the relationship between China and Mongolia.

When Batbayar was writing his book, India appointed Bakula Renpuchi, a Buddhist monk who had close relations with the Dalai Lama, as ambassador to Mongolia. He played an active role in the restoration of communist-destroyed temples and monasteries. Renpuchi and Mongolia’s then Minister of Culture and current president, Nambaryn Enkhbayar, made joint efforts to bring the Buddha’s ashes to Ulaanbaatar. Moreover, he repeatedly visited Mongolia in the 1990s. Batbayar does not provide a clear account of how these events could risk Mongol-Chinese relations.

Munkh-Ochir Dorjjugder sees a trilemma in Mongolian identity. He determines identity based on how Mongolians perceive themselves, and not from their geopolitical location, as Batbayar does. Central Asian nomadic tradition, East Asian Lamaist religion, and East European communist habits are the main factors that shaped Mongolians’ perception about themselves.<sup>26</sup> Further, he correlates these identities with the current interests of the nation. Self-identification of Mongolians as East Asians thereby shapes the role of culture in the nation’s current foreign policy.

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<sup>25</sup> .Batbayar, 48.

<sup>26</sup> Munkh-Ochir Dorjjugder, “Correlation of Identity and Interest in Foreign Policy: Implications for Mongolia” (Master’s thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, 2003), 43 – 60.

In conclusion, Buddhism is commonly viewed in a historical and cultural context. Mongolian communists briefly used this religious factor for condemning Chinese Tibetan policy. The relationship between Mongolia and the Dalai Lama today, however, is viewed as a risk factor in Mongol-Chinese relation.

#### **4. Unanswered Questions and Challenges**

All researchers agree that a strong Lamaist relationship existed between Mongolia, Tibet and Manchuria. These ties played a significant role in the assimilation of these people. They were also sometimes used to exploit one another politically.

These relations no longer exist. Most researchers today do not discuss Lamaism in Mongolia's current and future foreign policy, although Batbayar sees the relationship between Mongolia and the Dalai Lama as a risk factor in Mongolian-Chinese relations.

One can assume that India's engagement with Mongolia through religious ties is a relatively modest attempt to affect Chinese interest. In light of this, it is important to examine what would happen if Mongolia faces the most radical possibility of the Dalai Lama's reincarnation in Mongolia. Would "East Asian Buddhist" culture be determinant in such a case? How much pressure would the country face and how would it respond? This thesis focuses on these questions.

#### **C. METHODS AND SOURCES**

This thesis will use the case study method to analyze the impact of the Dalai Lama's possible reincarnation in Mongolia on Mongolia's foreign policy, especially its policy with China. Taiwan's actions in the context of its independence claim under China's threat have prompted many interesting discussions among scholars, which may be useful in examining the effects of the Dalai Lama's possible reincarnation in Mongolia.

The strong Taiwanese identity is the basis of Taiwan's nationalism and independence claims; however, scholars debate how much risk the Mongolian people are willing to tolerate in order to maintain these claims. The electorates' policy preferences,



whether Taiwanese or Chinese or both, have changed from time to time.<sup>27</sup> Robert Ross explains that a decrease in popular support for independence in recent years is associated with an increase of external threats.<sup>28</sup> In contrast, Bevin Chu argues that the defining factor of such a decrease is the increase in self-identification of the Taiwanese people as Chinese.<sup>29</sup>

Phillip Sanders observes that political and economic relations across the Taiwan Strait have developed in opposite directions.<sup>30</sup> Taiwan's independence claim jeopardizes the political relations,, as opposed to rapidly integrating the two economies. The domestic politics of Taiwan reflect this tension. The Pan Green coalition, consisting of the Democratic Progress Party, the Taiwan Solidarity Union and others, pursues the independence claim. The Pan Blue coalition, consisting of the Kuomintang Party and the People's First Party, rejects this independence ideology, but desires peaceful unification with China. The Chinese Communist Party is actively developing party-to-party relations with the Pan Blue coalition parties as leverage in discouraging Taiwan independence claim.<sup>31</sup>

China's military capacity for power projection in the Taiwan Strait is debated among scholars.<sup>32</sup> However, the Anti-Secession Law adopted by the National Congress of the PRC showed China's firm commitment to war in the case of Taiwan's declaration

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<sup>27</sup> David A. Newberry, "Democratic Chaos: How Taiwanese Democracy Destabilized Cross-Strait Relations," (Master's thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, 2005), 24 -25.

<sup>28</sup> Robert S. Ross, "Taiwan's Fading Independence Movement," *Foreign Affairs*, March/April 2006, 146.

<sup>29</sup> Bevin Chu, "Dying for Taiwan Independence," *The China Desk*, April 8, 2005, [http://thechinadesk.tripod.com/dying\\_for\\_ti.htm](http://thechinadesk.tripod.com/dying_for_ti.htm) (accessed June 5, 2007).

<sup>30</sup> Philip Sanders, "Long-Term Trends in China- Taiwan Relations: Implications for U.S. Taiwan Policy," *Asian Survey*, vol. 45, no.6, (Nov-Dec, 2005) 987 – 989.

<sup>31</sup> Chris Buckley, "Opposition Visit Begins for Taiwan Nationalists," *International Herald Tribune*, April 27, 2005, <http://www.iht.com/articles/2005/04/26/news/china.php> (accessed April 30, 2005).

<sup>32</sup> Discussion about the PRC capacity of power projection and military dominance. Bates Gill and Michael O'Hanlon, "China's Hollow Military" in *China Cross Talk: The American Debate over China Policy since Normalization*, Scott Kennedy ed. (Lanham, Boulder, New York, Oxford; Rowman & Littlefield Publisher, Inc, 2003) 201 -209. James Lilley and Carl Ford "China's Military: A Second Opinion" *Ibid.*, 210 -218.

of independence. The U.S. policy of strategic ambiguity deters both sides from taking radical steps, but Washington may change this policy due to developments in the strait.<sup>33</sup>

The Dalai Lama's possible reincarnation in Mongolia and its consequent impact in Mongolian policy-making shares parallels with the rise of the Taiwanese independence movement and its impact in cross-Taiwan Strait relations. Both Mongolia and Taiwan have made relatively successful transitions to democracy. China is the most important factor of both countries' foreign policies. The only difference between them is that Mongolia is universally recognized as an independent nation. Taiwan has not been recognized as such, but has claimed the right of self-determination for more than a decade. A close study of the Taiwanese independence case, current politics in Taiwan, and Chinese intervention in Taiwanese politics may help to illuminate the possible outcomes of the Dalai Lama's possible reincarnation in Mongolia. .

### **1. Selection of the Case**

Cases were chosen on the basis of numerous similar factors. Mongolia and Taiwan share the following characteristics:

- Democratic systems hold policy makers responsible to voters.
- There are voters' preferences that have an impact on the interests of the great powers that affect Mongolia's foreign policy.
- Both are small powers that both are not influential in world affairs and are vulnerable to powerful neighbors.
- Growing Chinese power is the most important factor shaping both countries' foreign policy. Both countries are among the first to be affected by Chinese internal reform and expanding international influence.

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<sup>33</sup> Robert S. Ross argues that the United States can easily deter the PRC from invading Taiwan. Robert S. Ross, "Navigating the Taiwan Strait: Deterrence, Escalation Dominance, and U.S.-China Relations" *International Security*, vol. 27, no. 4, (Fall 2002) 49. Phillip Sanders, unlike Ross, concludes that U.S. might come to change policy of strategic ambiguity to clarity in the future. Sanders, "Long – Term Trends in China – Taiwan Relations," 991.

## 2. Hypothesis and the Case Selection

The thesis hypothesis is that the Dalai Lama's potential reincarnation in Mongolia would produce a new agenda in Mongolian internal politics. Politicians would likely split into two camps -- supporters and opponents of the Dalai Lama with regard to policy towards China.<sup>34</sup> The two factions are likely to advance different principles and policies. The supporters' main argument will probably stress the principle of democratic governance and argue that any government policy, including foreign policy, should reflect the people's will. Neither national politicians nor foreign powers may dictate or correct voters' preferences. The oppositions' main argument will likely be the principle of secularism and concern for security: no reincarnated Tibetan Lama should dictate the foreign policy of Mongolia, because it could threaten the nation's democracy and security.

Chinese policy with Mongolia and its democratic system may become very similar to its current policy with Taiwan. Beijing cannot directly interfere with Mongolian voters' preferences or threaten with military force. However, it will support the opposition against supporters of the Dalai Lama, using an approach paralleling its influence of Taiwan's politics regarding independence. Therefore, the cross-Strait politics of the Taiwanese independence case is useful to test the hypothesis of this thesis.

Taiwan is a democracy in consolidation. Taiwan suffered strong Kuomintang or Nationalist Party (KMT) rule for about 40 years. KMT governance was characterized by minority rule by wealthy and conservative nationalist Chinese refugees who had fled from the mainland. Taiwan's indigenous population was different from the mainlanders and they did not want to assimilate, but preferred independence to Chinese unification. Chiang Kai-Shek and his son strongly suppressed the political will of the indigenous population.

Lee Teng-hui, the successor of Chiang Jian-Guo, was a native Taiwanese. He ceased the state of emergency that had lasted since the KMT flee to Taiwan, starting

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<sup>34</sup> Discussion board on internet version of little newspaper article about possible invitation of Bogd Gegeen to engage religious administration 80 years later, clearly shows this trend. Participants were divided into two groups: supporters of Bogd Gegeen and opposers. G.Nergui, "Inviting Bogd Gegeen was discussed" [in Mongolian] *Ardyn erh*, April 18, 2006, <http://www.sonin.mn/?p=1249#more-1249> (accessed June 2007).

political liberalization and a democratic transition. When Taiwan gradually transitioned to democracy, the electorate voted in 2000 for Chen Shui-bian, the leader of the opposition party, who promised independence. Chen Shui-bian's policies, however, have been pragmatic. He has not declared Taiwanese independence, which would provoke war with the PRC. Sometimes democratization of Taiwan sounds like the Taiwanization of politics and raises the security concerns of internal publics and external powers.<sup>35</sup>

China's behavior in this context has been interesting. China uses elements of Taiwan's democratic regime to pursue its interests. Meanwhile, externally, it threatens to use military power. China collaborates with the KMT and People First Party (PFP) to contain DPP actions toward independence. A similar scenario may be observed in Mongolia.

### **3. Sources**

Primary sources for thesis research will include government documents of Taiwan and the PRC, as well as the Tibetan government-in-exile. Documents published on the internet will be used, especially in the case of analyzing the positions of the Taiwanese government and the Tibetan government-in-exile. The Dalai Lama's statements in regard to his reincarnation are another primary source..

Interviews with policy-makers can be the best primary source regarding policy. Competent analysts and government officials share valuable and reliable opinions about the matter, especially with respect to conditional predictions in the thesis, such as the possibility of the Dalai Lama's reincarnation in Mongolia and Mongolian policy options.

Relevant books and articles are helpful in explaining government positions. The literature is rich in comparison to government documents.. In particular, it provides detailed explanations regarding Sino-Taiwanese relations and Tibetan rebel against Chinese rule. Obviously, there is almost no literature available about the political impact of the possibility of the Dalai Lama's reincarnation in Mongolia. However, literature addressing the Sino-Taiwanese and Sino-Mongolian relationships are beneficial to learning about the unique facets of these relationships.

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<sup>35</sup> Robert A. Scalapino, "Taiwan – Opportunities and Challenges" in *Taiwan's National Security: Dilemmas and Opportunities*, ed. Alexander C. Tan and others, eds. (Wiltshire: Antony Rowe Ltd, 2001). 1-17; Cal Clark, "Successful Democratization in the ROC: Creating a Security Challenge" in *ibid* 19 – 59; Chia-Lung Lin, "National Identity and Taiwan Security" in *ibid*. 60 – 83. The book is a collection of researchers who discuss the Taiwanese democratization, national identity and security challenge.

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## **II. FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE THE STRATEGY OF SMALL COUNTRIES**

As a rational actor, a small power attempts to maximize its interests. The most immediate interest of a small power is survival. The difference between a great and a small country is the inherent power imbalance. This chapter examines international relations theories of small state behavior in preparation for subsequent analysis that specifically applies them to Mongolian and Taiwanese relations with China.

The first part of the chapter will discuss the inherent features of a small country and its international environment. The second part will discuss the limits of great powers and their policy priorities, which are different from those of small states and constrain such states' freedom of action. The third section discusses the possible common strategies in the context of small states' behavior. The fourth part summarizes the factors that directly influence a small state's behavior. The chapter will conclude with a brief summary of the discussions.

### **A. A SMALL POWER AND ITS INTERNATIONAL ENVIRONMENT**

#### **1. Inability and Vulnerability**

A small power's behavior is shaped by two inherent factors -- its inability to influence the global security environment and its vulnerability to attacks from a great power. In the world of anarchy, these threaten survival. Small powers, therefore, always feel insecure and threatened by others.

A lack of influence in the world order is an inherent characteristic of a small power. A country is a "small power" because its ability to shape other countries' behavior is greatly limited compared to great powers, which enjoy a far greater influence. Murari Raj Sharma explains that the existing international system shapes not only external threats to territorial integrity, but also internal factors such as economic, social, environmental and technological securities.<sup>36</sup> Small countries, therefore, react to the existing world order rather than being proactive or shaping the international system.

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<sup>36</sup> Murari Raj Sharma, "Security of Small States," *Regional Security Issues and Mongolia*. vol. 7, (Ulaanbaatar: The Institute for Strategic Studies, 1997).

“Small” and “great” are determined relative to the distribution of power between states. Small states are allocated fewer means for survival than others, and they are always haunted by feelings of insecurity and vulnerability to great powers. Small states can do little to change this. To a small power, everything looks large and fearsome.

The realist theory is therefore useful to explain a small power’s behavior. John J. Mearsheimer’s realist assumptions are valid and particularly important for small powers’ behavior. Great powers compete to shape the world order in their favor, and this competition directly affects small states. Small powers, in turn, can do nothing about it. Small countries stay outside of the competition, but are incredibly dependent on it. Furthermore, “the great powers inherently possess some offensive military capability,”<sup>37</sup> which by nature threatens a small power’s security. Small powers “can never be certain about other states’ intentions,”<sup>38</sup> and “survival is the primary goal”<sup>39</sup> of any small power in such an imbalanced world.

## **2. Contiguity and Vulnerability**

The relationship between power and fear with regard to nuclear weapons, geographic contiguity and the distribution of power affects the relationship between great and small powers in specific ways.<sup>40</sup>

Variables such as distance between small and great powers play a decisive role in the security of small powers. A small power is more vulnerable to its larger neighbors that share a common border, but rarely vulnerable to distant powers. Sharing a common border, on the one hand, diminishes the great neighbor's nuclear threat to a small power. Nuclear damage would devastate a great power as much as it would the target state. A nearby powerful neighbor, on the other hand, increases the threat of a conventional military offense. “Proximity is important to the escalation of disputes,” Susan G. Sample

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<sup>37</sup> John J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York, London; W. W. Norton & Company, 2001) 30.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid, 31.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 40- 46.

writes.<sup>41</sup> In a case of an immediate neighborhood, such as Mongolia, which sandwiched between two powers, proximity cancels the effect of the multi-polar world order. Mongolia's policy during the Cold War did not reflect the global Soviet-U.S. bipolar competition so much as the hostility of the Soviet-China relationship, a rivalry within the camp.

The importance of a large body of water is also significant to the relationships between great and small powers. Tibet was easily invaded by China despite its mountainous terrain. Taiwan, on the other hand, still maintains its quasi-independence from the PRC. This example also illustrates the role of an overwhelming land force and limited sea power.<sup>42</sup>

An example of an exception to this is Vietnam. It allied with the Soviet Union and went to war against China in 1979. Although Vietnam shares the land border with China, it is isolated by a large body of water from the Soviet Union. Distance and geography played negative roles in Vietnam's alliance policy.

Vietnam, however, is not a surprising case in light of two other factors. The Soviet Union provided military assistance to Hanoi against China. Therefore, the case can be explained as balancing the Soviet Union against China. Furthermore, Vietnam's case supports Frederic S. Pearson's findings that "if grievances in a nearby target are great enough, a country may attack and oppose the target government despite power disadvantages."<sup>43</sup> A small power will go to war if its very existence is at stake. Taiwan and Mongolia could have the same reaction if they found themselves under the same threat from China.

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<sup>41</sup> Susan G. Sample, "The Outcome of Military Buildups: Minor States vs. Major Powers," *Journal of Peace Research*, vol. 39, no.6, (Nov., 2002): 679.

<sup>42</sup> Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, 44. Mearsheimer explains the importance of large body of water with the fact that the United States was never attacked by foreign powers thanks to two oceans separating it from hostile powers. The continental powers, in contrast, constantly invaded each other. Further, he emphasizes the importance of land military power, which led the country to final victory, unlike others such as naval and air powers, whose primary goal is to support ground troops: "The Primacy of Land Power," *Ibid.*

<sup>43</sup> Frederic S. Pearson, "Geographic Proximity and Foreign Military Intervention," *The Journal of Conflict Resolution*, vol.18, no.3, (September 1974), 450.



### **3. A Buffer State**

The buffer state is a specific phenomenon of a small country's geo-strategic environment. Buffer states always exist in bipolarity, where two major powers mutually fear each other. The security reassurance between these two major powers is the very existence of the small and weak buffer state, whose only goal is separation of the two powers' military forces and prevention of direct confrontation.

Mearsheimer explains that compared to the multi-polar system, the bipolar system is one of the most stable orders of the world. In contrast to a "less firmly structured" multi-polarity, the bipolar world is a "rigid structure." The competition of two great powers is not ambiguous and minor powers should adjust to it. In multipolarity, the asymmetries of power lead to more inequality. Therefore, "the potential miscalculation" is greater than in a bipolar system, where the asymmetries tend to be equal.<sup>44</sup>

These assumptions are valid in the case of a bipolarity surrounding a minor buffer power. The calculation that one who allies with a buffer state will enjoy an advantage over the other is clear. It also provides an opportunity for a buffer state to exploit the fears of both neighboring powers for its own interest. The buffer state's policy of alliance plays a critical role in the security policy of the stronger neighbors.

## **B. LIMITS OF A GREAT POWER**

### **1. Relationship with Other Powers**

The world order is the main concern of great powers and a main restraint of great powers' behavior. This section discusses how the relationship of a great power with other great powers can restrain its behavior toward a small power. A great power's worldwide interests and the importance of relationships with other powers are critical factors. .

A great power has a range of interests throughout the region and the world, which lead the great power to carefully divide its resources and efforts into various parts of the world. This gives a comparative advantage to a small country to advance its position over the great power in a certain focused area of policy. Thomas Christensen argues that U.S. forces are sparsely distributed all over the world and tied with various interests in

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<sup>44</sup> Mearsheimer, 339 – 344.

different regions. If China concentrated its power solely on the Taiwan Strait, China would easily control the strait. Christenson cites Niu Jun, who writes that the “strategic line” of the United States is “too long” and stretches around the world, and that U.S. power is “scattered” throughout it.<sup>45</sup> This assessment is valid not only in U.S.-China relations, but also in other asymmetric power relationships. China is tied to at least three different areas -- the Korean Peninsula, Taiwan Strait, and India and Central Asia. A small country with a concentrated force could take advantage of a U.S. distraction.

A great power places more importance on its relationship with other great powers. Disputes among the great powers are more likely to escalate to war, compared to disputes between two small states or between great and small states.<sup>46</sup> Competition between a status quo power and challenging power is a question of life or death. A great power's priorities in its foreign policy restrain its policy with a small power. This restraint can clearly be seen in a buffer state case. Mongolia is a buffer state between Russia and China. Both great powers formulate policy with Mongolia in the context of its policy toward other great powers. Indeed, the existence of a buffer state relies on the mutual fears of competing powers.

## **2. International Institutions**

International institutions are one of the limiting factors that tie the hands of great powers. Theories explain the effects of the international institutions in many different ways. These explanations can be divided into two main categories of how they restrain the behavior of great powers--the nature of common economic interests, or a state's selfish rational calculation.

Liberalist theory explains that international institutions prevent conflicts in several ways. To begin with, countries that benefit from international trade have a common interest to keep the international free trade organizations as they are. Furthermore, a democratic country's behavior is transparent and predictable, which reduces the uncertainty of another country's intentions and reassures the security

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<sup>45</sup> Thomas Christensen, “Posing Problems without Catching Up: China's Rise and Challenges for U.S. Security Policy,” *International Security*, vol. 25, no.4 (Spring 2001), 20.

<sup>46</sup> Sample, 679.

concern.<sup>47</sup> Additionally, the international organizations and institutions may constrain the great power from an aggressive undertaking with binding legal obligations and economic profits. “Coercing norm-breakers” with a military force under the international organization's mandate is one possible measure. “Mediating among conflicting parties” with a legal capacity and “conveying information” to clear each others’ intention can reduce the cost of both parties to peacefully resolve the problem.<sup>48</sup>

John G. Ikenberry supports the thesis that the international organizations provide stability in the world, but he argues it is through states’ rational calculation. The international institutions reduce the *returns of power*, but increase the *returns of institutions*. Member states' behavior, including that of great powers, is bound in the “predictable courses of action,” which the author refers to as a *lock-in* effect of the international institutions.<sup>49</sup> The international organizations do not directly change the distribution of power; however, they increase the cost of aggression.

In this regard, Ulaanbaatar views the United Nations and other regional security institutions as important for “protecting its national interests through its political and diplomatic means.”<sup>50</sup> Unlike Taiwan, Mongolia’s UN membership and its recognition by the international community as an independent nation guarantee Mongolia’s sovereignty and make an aggression against the nation expensive in terms of international politics. Through the participating UN Peacekeeping Operation and other means, Mongolia seeks to gain high prestige among the community of nations.

### **C. POLICY OPTIONS FOR A SMALL POWER**

International relations theory looks at two main survival strategies of states -- balancing and bandwagoning. Balancing is allying against a threatening power, while

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<sup>47</sup> Bruce Russett and John Oneal, “Triangulating Peace: Democracy, Interdependence, and International Organizations,” (New York, London: W. W. Norton & Company, 2001), 54.

<sup>48</sup> Russett and Oneal, 163-164.

<sup>49</sup> John G. Ikenberry, “Institution, Strategic Restraint, and the Persistence of American Postwar Order,” *International Security*. vol 23, no. 3 (Winter, 1998 – 1999), 55-56.

<sup>50</sup> *Diplomatic Bluebook 2006* (Ulaanbaatar: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2006), 188.

bandwagoning is allying with the threatening power.<sup>51</sup> Omni-balancing is a specific policy option for Third World countries with government regimes that are usually characterized as oppressive and undemocratic.<sup>52</sup>

## **1. Balancing**

Balancing against the threat of a great power is the best option for keeping state power; however, it is a difficult mission to accomplish. Mearsheimer describes three kinds of balancing behaviors -- signaling war or expressing the state's commitment to a war if another state's hostile action threatens the state's vital interests; external balancing, where the threatened state seeks an alliance to balance against the threatening power; and internal balancing, where the threatened state mobilizes its national resources to deter the aggressor.<sup>53</sup>

For a small power, balancing means external balancing – allying with one major power against another. Clearly, signaling commitment to war against a great power and internal balancing with scarce resources are not viable options for small states. Even at its full mobilization capacity, a small power may not balance the major power if the power gap is too wide. An example is the Mongolian alliance with the Soviet Union against China. Mongolia had a highly effective mobilization system under the communist ideology in the 1960's, but it was no match against China's overwhelming military power, which threatened its territorial integrity. Mongolia had no choice other than external balancing with the Soviet Union.

Stephen M. Walt identifies two reasons for balancing strategy. The first is to balance a weaker power against a stronger, and the second is to seek a relatively greater influence over the weaker side.<sup>54</sup> Small powers seek relative advantage, not greater influence, in the alliance. China's invasion of Tibet and the Great Leap Forward policy of

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<sup>51</sup> Stephen M. Walt, "Alliances: Balancing and Bandwagoning" in *International Politics: Enduring Concepts and Contemporary Issues*, ed. Robert J. Art and Robert Jervis, (New York: HarperCollins Publishers Inc., 1992), 70.

<sup>52</sup> Steven R. David, "Explaining Third World Alignment," *World Politics*, vol. 43, no. 3, (January, 2001), 236.

<sup>53</sup> Mearsheimer, 156.

<sup>54</sup> Walt, 70-71.

the 1950's may have signaled that the Mongolian alliance with the PRC could be devastating. The Soviet attitude toward satellite states was relatively better and Mongolia's admission to the Council of Mutual Economic Assistance promised a greater position in the alliance.

In the same way, supporting international institutions can be a balancing strategy for small powers. Reducing the return of power restrains a great power's behavior toward a small power. Meanwhile, a small power also enjoys an increasing return of institutions, having an equal foothold with the great power and filling the power gap against it.

The most vital pre-condition for balancing is the availability of an alliance. A buffer state's security is embedded in two or more powers – it almost never lacks a chance to balance one power against another. Both great powers seek an alliance with a buffer state in case a conflict escalates. This pushes the buffer country to choose one power over the other, but it can choose with whom it will ally. In other words, a small power should make the best choice of the two and give up its interests in exchange for security guarantee of a great power. Such an alliance would have an effect similar to appeasement.

Such an alliance can also use a strategy of buck-passing as a way to engage one major power against another. Buck-passing is the attempt to “get another state to bear the burden of deterring or possibly fighting an aggressor, while it remains on the side-line.”<sup>55</sup> Indeed, the one major power deters the other by assuring the buffer country's existence and promising buck-catching in the case of the other's invasion. A small power's external balancing attempts to buck-pass its problem to another state; however, it cannot remain outside the possible conflict.

It can be concluded that a small power's alliance policy also coincides with its policy buck-passing.

## **2. Bandwagoning**

Small states choose the bandwagoning strategy under extreme circumstances. Bandwagoning, according to Mearsheimer, is joining “forces with its dangerous foe to

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<sup>55</sup> Mearsheimer, 139.

get at least some small portion of the spoils of war” when there is no “hope of preventing the aggressor from gaining power at its expense.”<sup>56</sup> It is an “ineffective and dangerous strategy.” The bandwagoning state gives up its power and allows the threatening power to exploit it.<sup>57</sup>

Pre-conditions of bandwagoning include the power disparity between great and small states and the absence of a reliable alliance against the aggressor.<sup>58</sup> Mongolia’s alliance with the Soviet Union against the PRC in the 1960’s is an example of bandwagoning. The Soviet Union was overwhelmingly stronger than the PRC and the international community, except for the communist camp, had not recognized the PRC as a sovereign nation. Under these circumstances, alignment with Moscow provided more security advantages for Ulaanbaatar than an alliance with Beijing. An example of unsuccessful bandwagoning is the Tibetan policy to surrender to China in 1952. Tibet had neither the power to stand against the Chinese military threat nor a reliable ally to defend it. Under these conditions, Tibet agreed to give up its sovereignty with the hope that the aggressor would respect its national identity, which never happened.

Not only the absence of an alliance, but also the rivalry of two major powers, can eliminate the minor power’s chance of balancing them. Kenneth Waltz explains that “the game of power politics, if really played hard, presses the players into two rival camps, though so complicated is the business of making and maintaining alliances that the game may be played hard enough to produce that result only under the pressure of war.”<sup>59</sup> As a result of intense pressure from neighboring powers, a buffer state may have no choice other than to ally with one against another. Ravdan Bold summarizes two strategies of survival of a small power as “entrusting of its security to a stronger power by working an alliance deal with it,” and “conducting a neutral policy by refraining from collaborating

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<sup>56</sup> Mearsheimer, 139.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 163

<sup>59</sup> Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, (New York: McGraw-Hill Inc., 1979), 167.

with foreign nations in both the political and military spheres,” where the latter is rarely the case.<sup>60</sup> Entrusting its security to a major power, or so-called bandwagoning, was the most popular strategy during the Cold War.

Appeasement, an alternative to bandwagoning, is a strategy to avoid. Unlike bandwagoning, appeasement attempts to modify the aggressor’s behavior and is based on assuaging the aggressor’s feelings of vulnerability. By appeasing and supporting the aggressor, a threatened power reduces the aggressor’s fear and tries to avoid direct invasion. However, appeasement also relinquishes power and makes the aggressor become more powerful at its expense, just like bandwagoning.<sup>61</sup>

The reassurance strategy might have the same effect as appeasement, but it prevents the aggressor from exploiting the country’s power. Reassurance has the same goal of meeting the “adversaries’ needs and weakness” through building confidence and reducing uncertainty. Meanwhile, it proposes to establish limits of competition, as opposed to direct obedience, as appeasement suggests.<sup>62</sup>

### **3. Omni-balancing**

Omni-balancing is widely viewed as one of a small power's policy options if it is an authoritarian country. When considering omni-balancing, the leader of a small country must not only consider the external security environment, but his own domestic political risks as well.

The basic assumptions of this theory can be summarized as follows: the Third World countries that enjoy less domestic stability and strong rule usually have an authoritarian government. Therefore, the political risk of failing in domestic affairs is higher.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Ravdan Bold, “The Security of Small State: Option for Mongolia,” *Regional Security Issues and Mongolia*, no.9, 2000, 13.

<sup>61</sup> Mearsheimer, 163.

<sup>62</sup> Janice Gross Stein, “Deterrence and Reassurance” in *Behavior, Society, and Nuclear War*, ed. Phillip E. Tetlock, Jo L. Husband, Robert Jervis, Paul C. Stein and Charles Tilly, (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 31 – 35.

<sup>63</sup> David, 236.

It therefore has limits to explaining small, democratic country's alliance policy. Omnibalancing emphasizes the domestic political regime of a small country. In addition, great powers may prefer omni-balancing behavior from the leaders of small countries.

#### **D. CONDITIONS OF A SMALL POWER BUCKPASSING**

Survival strategy of a small country depends on various external and internal factors. Domestic politics and policy making varies from country to country, since leaders face different political risks within various political regimes and systems. International or regional security situations, such as direct military threat from another power or a strong economic dependence on a country, as well as availability of an alliance, considerably affect the calculation of a small country's security policy as well.

##### **1. Domestic Political System**

The domestic political regime is one of the important variables of relations between asymmetric powers. Whether a regime is democratic or authoritarian determines the dynamics of an alliance strategy and a great power's policy with another country.

Omni-balancing behavior is expected from leaders of small countries with authoritarian political systems. The domestic political cost of authoritarian leaders is high. In fact, it could be a matter of life or death, depending on the severity of the regime.. To secure the leadership position at the national level, the leaders of authoritarian countries ally with foreign powers who guarantee regime stability. A great power can easily ensure its interest in a small authoritarian regime simply with allying with ruling elites of the country, especially if these elites are unable to effectively control their population.

Such domestic risk is viable in a democratic country; however, it is viable in different ways. Leaders of democratic countries are "punished for policy failure: they are forced from office,"<sup>64</sup> and opposition parties are more than ready to replace them. A great power may ally with a political party or interest group; however, it is difficult to receive

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<sup>64</sup> Russett and Oneal, 55.



popular support to promote the allied party into a leadership position. Yet compared to an autocracy, a lobby, party, or other group, can actively engage in political discussions.

Democracy, therefore, is open to a great power's influence and more tolerant of external pressures and internal interests. Bruce Russett and John Oneal explain that "all these (decision-making in matters of peace and war) come from free movement of information in liberal democracies, the existence of opposition groups, and the accountability of national leaders, which make democracies *transparent* to outsiders."<sup>65</sup> Furthermore, democracy is not only transparent in terms of information exchange. Existing opposition and lobby groups may also share the rival country's interests and promote them to the political decision-making of the nation.

## **2. Immediate Military Threat**

An immediate military threat is the decisive factor shaping a small country's policy-making. Countries behave differently in peace and war.

An immediate military threat from a major power is the gravest concern of any small country. A study illustrates that a mixed dispute, consisting of a major and small power, is the second most likely kind of dispute to escalate, after disputes between two major powers. 13.7% of 1017 mixed disputes have escalated into violence.<sup>66</sup> Mutual military build-ups between hostile countries also increase tension between states, whether the conflicting countries are major powers or small powers; however, Susan Sample omitted mixed disputes from her analysis of the mutual military build-up effect, believing such relations do not exist between asymmetric powers.<sup>67</sup>

The possibility of a current crisis escalating into a military conflict requires a careful assessment of the adversary's commitment to use military power. Past Action Theory and Current Calculus Theory examine the credibility of such a commitment. Past Action Theory examines the history of keeping and breaking commitments to the adversary power's leaders and predicts the possibility of the use of force in a crisis. In

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<sup>65</sup> Russett and Oneal, 54.

<sup>66</sup> Sample, 679.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 681.

contrast, Current Calculus Theory measures the military power and vital interests of the aggressor and forecasts the seriousness of threatening behavior. Daryl G. Press tested the two theories in four different cases and concluded that Current Calculus was valid. Past Action theory requires a careful comparison between cases in “the same part of the world, between the same countries, over the same issues and the same level of stakes, and involving the same political leaders on both sides.”<sup>68</sup>

Russia might then be expected to promise to protect Mongolian independence from Chinese invasion, since the Soviet Union did the same thing in 1939 for Japan and provided a reliable security guarantee from the hostile PRC during the Cold War. Today, Washington’s commitment to defending South Korea seems to be reliable, because U.S. troops fought for South Korea against the Northern invasion during the Korean War. Press explains that in contrast, “their enemies continued to assess their credibility on the basis of the current balance of power and interest – just as Current Calculus Theory predicts.”<sup>69</sup> Russian military assistance to Mongolia in the case of an external aggression would depend on the current balance of power between China and Russia, as well as Moscow’s interest in this balance. Similarly defending Taiwan would depend on Washington’s interest in Taiwan relative to China.

Assessing the military balance between great and small powers promises little to a small country. A small power is small because it is weak. Efficiency of mobilization, structure,<sup>70</sup> as well as doctrine and continuity reform may have an impact on military power, but it is not sufficient to change the balance. However, any small country may go to war against great odds if their vital interests are seriously threatened by great powers. For example, Israel fights almost all Arab countries and radical religious extremist elements because its very existence is at stake. Vietnam bravely stood against China’s invasion in 1979. Even such small powers may find occasion to engage militarily with a much larger neighbor.

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<sup>68</sup> Daryl G. Press, *Calculating Credibility: How Leaders Assess Military Threats*, (Ithaca, London: Cornell University Press, 2005), 147.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 148.

<sup>70</sup> Mearsheimer, 79. Mearsheimer determined the efficiency ability to convert national wealth into military power.

### 3. Economic Dependency

A small country's close economic integration with a great power brings both benefits and threats. Realist and liberal views disagree on this point.

Realist theories view the economic factor as an important means to support a state's military. Mearsheimer maintains that "wealth is important because a state cannot build a powerful military if it does not have the money and technology to equip, train, and continually modernize its fighting forces."<sup>71</sup> However, realists provide no answer to how economic interdependence influences the decision-making in the context of a great-small power dyad.

Liberal theories address the issue of economic interdependence. The Democratic Peace Theory promises a brilliant future for peace with deep economic integration. "Higher levels of economically important trade, as indicated by the bilateral trade-to-GDP ratio," Russett and Oneal argue, "are associated with fewer incidences of militarized international disputes." This effect was observed regardless of other important factors, such as "geographic contiguity, the balance of power, alliance bonds, democracy, and economic growth."<sup>72</sup> The trade relationship is more important than war, which could ruin mutual benefits.

Asymmetric trade does not lead to conflict, as Russett and Oneal prove. "Economically important trade between large states and small states increases the prospects for peace just as it does for states of equal size." They explain further why this is true. "If the small country does not resist the powerful one, there may be no need for the latter to exercise its military might."<sup>73</sup> This statement sounds imperialistic for small countries. Rather, when they have the option to do so, small powers should recognize and avoid relative gains derived from an asymmetric trade under a military threat.

Taiwan is therefore concerned about China's growing military threat and its increasing economic interdependence with China. China's economic gain literally fattens its military budget, which literally invests in military modernization and weapon

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<sup>71</sup> Mearsheimer, 61.

<sup>72</sup> Russett and Oneal, 154

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 148.

purchases against Taiwan itself.<sup>74</sup> “Deteriorating political relations might cause a state to reduce its economic dependence on a potential adversary,” as Russet and Oneal point out, “it is much harder for a state to manipulate its total trade-to-GDP ration by restricting economic ties with all states simultaneously.”<sup>75</sup>

Economic sanctions are viewed as a useful economic tool for punishment in foreign policy. Unilateral sanctions, as Meghan L. O’Sullivan notes, are less effective in terms of impact, effectiveness, and utility than multilateral sanctions.<sup>76</sup> In a buffer state scenario, unilateral economic sanctions placed on a small power by a great power can force the buffer state to cooperate with other major powers with which the great power shares the buffer. A small country that has an ally or another supporter is more difficult to sanction.

Economic sanctions may be effective between rival powers or a small power and its ally. Chinese economic sanctions on North Korea would have a devastating impact on the target country and could effectively achieve China’s goal. The sanctions would be good in terms of utility, having almost no cost, and easily achieve the goal. Such a measure could be more useful than other means of power, such as military. Sanctions may be effective if a small country is isolated and has an asymmetric trade relationship with a threatening power.

#### **4. International Support**

In a dispute against a major power, the availability of international support for the small power plays a critical role. The availability of an ally and the ally’s policy towards the small country play a decisive role in the behavior of small countries. The alliance policy of a small country usually coincides with an attempt of buck-passing, or external balancing against the aggressor; however, the country itself cannot remain outside the conflict.

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<sup>74</sup> Ping Deng, “Taiwan’s Restriction of Investment in China in the 1990’s: A Relative Gains Approach,” *Asian Survey*, vol. 40, no. 6, (Nov.-Dec., 2000), 979.

<sup>75</sup> Russet and Oneal, 154.

<sup>76</sup> Meghan L. O’Sullivan, *Shrewd Sanctions: Statecraft and State Sponsors of Terrorism* (Washington D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2003), 24-32.

Hans Mouritzen asserts that a weak power's basic set of relationships with the strong powers in its salient environment determine a small country's behavior.. In the case of a dispute between two major powers, small countries can have very different strategies. Mouritzen notes the different reactions of Sweden and Finland, both weak powers under "the same systemic influences" during the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979. Sweden's policy was to activate the support of Western Europe. Finland took no action during this escalation. The difference between these small countries' reactions can be attributed to their respective constellations with major powers established in peace time. Sweden had a strong tie with NATO; Finland, in contrast, was a neutral country. <sup>77</sup>

Direct defense partnerships and alliance play an important role in such decision-making. Small powers are usually willing to join in an alliance if the geopolitical environment does not limit such a policy. Eastern European countries, formerly seen as a "sanitary zone" between Germany and Russia, joined a military alliance to ensure their security throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century. For historical reasons, Finland and Austria remained neutral in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Japan-U.S. and South Korea-U.S. security treaties played an important role during the Cold War and still play the same balancing role against China, an emerging regional power.

Taiwan attempts to buck-pass or balance the PRC based on its close military relationship with Washington. Taiwan perceives the U.S.-Taiwan security relationship as a possibility for an alliance with the United States in the case of a Chinese invasion. Under this assumption, current Taiwanese leaders gradually push U.S. interests toward the edge. In a small country's case, an alliance policy hardly differs from buck-passing. The question, therefore, is whether the United States will catch the buck.

A small country may also decide to unilaterally oppose an aggressor. "If grievances in a nearby target are great enough," Pearson observes, "a country may attack and oppose the target government despite power disadvantages."<sup>78</sup> Yugoslavia stood alone against NATO-led multinational forces when its leaders considered the nation's

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<sup>77</sup> Hans Mouritzen, "Tension between the Strong, and the Strategies of the Weak," *Journal of Peace Research*, vol. 28, no.2, (May, 1991), 226.

<sup>78</sup> Frederic S. Pearson, 450.

vital interest in Kosovo at stake. Vietnam fearlessly fought China's intervention even though its geographic location isolated it from the main ally.

## **E. CONCLUSION**

As a rational actor in international relations, a small country attempts to maximize its interest. The small power with the greatest survival interests will have the greatest difficulties because of its inability to influence the current world order and balance of power, and its vulnerability to the aggression of great powers.

Great powers have some constraints on their behavior as well. The world order is the primary concern of great powers and a global competition between a status quo power and a challenging power requires a lot of resources. International institutions also play an important role that limits the actions of great powers under certain circumstances. The long-term objective of a great power is a global hegemony, but it cannot achieve this objective by breaking down international institutions.

These constraints of great powers provide room for small powers to survive. Due to its limited resources and capacities, a small power cannot achieve its foreign policy goals without external resources. A balancing strategy, therefore, coincides with buck-passing. Bandwagoning, however, can be devastating if it fails. The example of Tibet illustrates this.

The main factors of a small country's decision-making are its political regime and its ability to balance external and internal pressure. A great power can easily ensure its interest in small countries by allying with their domestic political groups or ruling elites. An immediate military threat pushes a small power's strategy to its limit; however, there is no guarantee of changing its position in favor of the great power. Economic interdependence is mainly positive for the prosperity of any country, but dependence of a small isolated country on one great power can be devastating in strategic terms. A small power's alliance policy shapes its behavior. Indeed, the constellation or close relationship with a great power will greatly shape its policy under extreme foreign pressure. Balancing or buck-passing coincides with small states' policy imperatives of compensating its weakness through external balancing.

A small power can maximize its national interest if it is focused on a specific limited goal. It can achieve this through the manipulation of the rules of an existing international system and the major powers' conflicting interests, balancing one against another. However, the main concern remains national security, because security is very fragile and cannot withstand any aggressive policy of any great power.

### **III. TAIWAN: DILEMMA BETWEEN INDEPENDENCE AND PEACE**

In the case of 15<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama's reincarnation, Mongolia may find itself in a situation very similar to that of Taiwan. Taiwan experiences a dilemma between independence, driven by voters' preferences, and a threat to peace by Chinese military invasion. In the same way, Mongolia would find itself caught between a democracy that requires its government to be responsive for its people's religious needs, and a security threat due to Beijing's concern about the Dalai Lama's influence over Chinese ethnic minorities. In both cases, the democracy that holds the government responsive to voters also leads these small powers down a collision course with a great power.

Taiwan is gradually maximizing its independence claim through the manipulation of U.S. security interests against China; however, international security concerns prevent any radical action. This chapter analyzes two main dynamics of Taiwanese politics--internal politics and external policies--which would be comparable with Mongolia as a democracy and as a small power. This analysis will also address Chinese policies for peacefully advancing its interest, using Taiwan's open and competitive political system.

#### **A. DOMESTIC FACTORS**

Although the two countries differ culturally, geopolitically, and economically,, they share many common characteristics. Both countries are undergoing a transition from an authoritarian regime to a democracy. These transitions have brought comparable identity issues to both countries. The Taiwanese identity that was oppressed by the KMT regime for many years has surfaced in the political arena and has brought the independence claim to the forefront of politics. The religious identity of Mongolians that the communist regime once attempted to liquidate has revived in the society after the collapse of the totalitarian regime. Religion is not yet politicized; however, it will surely be in case of the Dalai Lama's reincarnation in Mongolia. Taiwan's current social and political development therefore provide helpful insight.



## 1. Public and Identity

The people of Taiwan face a self-identification dilemma of whether they are Chinese or Taiwanese, and this division is reflected in voters' policy preferences. In the same way, elements of Mongolian national identity; Buddhist tradition and communist legacy, frequently collide in foreign and domestic politics regarding religious issues.

Many scholars have observed the historical roots of Taiwan's identity since the 1990's, when KMT leadership gradually transformed from mainlanders to native Taiwanese. Denny Roy concludes that Taiwan is in a nation-building process. Taiwan is an ethnically diversified country and belongs culturally to the general sphere of Chinese civilization. However, it has almost never been a part of China politically, nor has it been ruled by itself.<sup>79</sup> There is much discussion on aboriginal culture, Chinese settlement, and Portuguese and Japanese invasion, which have played their respective roles in shaping the Taiwanese culture. Despite the common "Chinese" cultural background, the KMT was a foreign oppressive regime that suppressed the indigenous culture and language.<sup>80</sup> Taiwan's democratization since the 1990's has revived the indigenous people's desire to promote its claim to independence..

Some U.S. scholars, such as Kerry Dumbaugh, are concerned that the Taiwanese identity "may lead to ethnic polarization and political conflict among the population."<sup>81</sup> Democratization has allowed the indigenous intelligentsia to actively participate in politics; however, a growing number of these politicians have radically changed the political agenda from unification to independence. This will affect not only mainlanders' interest in Taiwan, but also China's interest, which considers Taiwan its inseparable

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<sup>79</sup> Denny Roy, *Taiwan: A Political History*, (Ithaca, London: Cornell University Press, 2003), 242-244.

<sup>80</sup> Michael Stainton, "The Politics of Taiwan Aboriginal Origins" in *Modern History of Taiwan*, ed. Rubinstein, (Armonk, New York, London: M. E. Sharpe, Inc., 1999), 27-44; Edward B. Vermeer, "Up the Mountain and Out to the Sea: The Expansion of Fukienese in the Late Ming Period," *Ibid.*, 45-83; John E. Wills, Jr., "The Seventeenth-Century Transformation: Taiwan Under the Dutch and Cheng Regime," *Ibid.*, 84-106; Harry J. Lamley, "Taiwan Under Japanese Rule, 1895-1945: Vicissitudes of Colonialism," *Ibid.*, 201-260; and Steven Phillips, "Between Assimilation and Independence: Taiwanese Political Aspirations Under Nationalist Chinese Rule, 1945-1948," *Ibid.*, 275-319. The book is a collection of 16 historic essays..

<sup>81</sup> Kerry Dumbaugh, "Taiwan: Recent Development and U.S. Policy Choices," *CRS Issue Brief for Congress*, March 30, 2006, 1.

territory. Democratization and dramatic change of the political agenda could lead to a war. This was a legitimate concern in the late 1990's and widely discussed by scholars.<sup>82</sup>

This concern, however, seems to be unfounded. Democracy finds the exact equilibrium among various political interests. Taiwan electorates recently showed less support to the radical DPP independence claim, relaxing the tensions of a war and ethnic polarization. "Since most people wish to postpone their decision on the independence/unification to the future," Chi Huang explains, "they also tend to be quite sensitive to the current and future interaction between Taiwan and China."<sup>83</sup> Indeed, the social factor of the Taiwanese identity dilemma has prevented the DPP-led government to take radical steps toward independence.

The Taiwanese are ready to give up their national identity in exchange for peace. "A large percentage of the people in Taiwan can simultaneously agree to unite with China, if China becomes modernized and democratic," Emerson M.S. Niou states, "and to declare independence if China will not use force and peace can be maintained."<sup>84</sup> His studies reveal that Taiwan's claim to independence is conditional and depends on "China's military threat, the USA's security commitment to Taiwan, and China's prospects for becoming democratic and prosperous."<sup>85</sup> The conditional nature of the independence claim seems to be common with those of even the youngest generation, who hesitate to identify themselves as solely Chinese, and are neutral in politics of national independence. "During the past eight years the proportion of Chinese identifiers," G. Andy Chang and T. Y. Wang found, "has dropped substantially for the third and fourth generations from 22.6 and 23.1 percent in 1994 to 8.5 and 4.5 percent in

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<sup>82</sup> Robert A. Scalapino, "Taiwan – Opportunities and Challenges" in *Taiwan's National Security: Dilemmas and Opportunities*, ed. Alexander C. Tan and others, (Wiltshire: Antony Rowe Ltd, 2001), 1-17; Cal Clark, "Successful Democratization in the ROC: Creating a Security Challenge" in *Ibid.*, 19-59.; Chia-Lung Lin, "National Identity and Taiwan Security" in *Ibid.*, 60-83. The book is a collection of researchers' discussions about Taiwanese democratization, national identity and security challenge.

<sup>83</sup> Chi Huang, "Dimensions of Taiwanese/Chinese Identity and National Identity in Taiwan: A Latent Class Analysis," *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, vol. 40 (1/2), 66.

<sup>84</sup> Emerson M.S. Niou, "A New Measure of Preference on the Independence-Unification Issue in Taiwan," *Journal of Asian and African Studie*, vol. 40 (1/2), 101.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*

2002, respectively.”<sup>86</sup> However, they preferred “maintaining the status quo without making a commitment to future action,”<sup>87</sup> either toward unification or independence. The Taiwanese prefer to identify themselves as Taiwanese but are also ready to identify themselves as Chinese if China threatens with military power. The Taiwanese identity and independence claim, therefore, still lack the commitment of the population.

The conditionality of Mongolian religious salience may be comparable with the Taiwanese in terms of the Chinese factor. Buddhism in Mongolia has revived after a 70-year-long communist oppression, and the Dalai Lama has demonstrated genuine religious interest by his frequent visits in the last two decades. China has closely observed the Dalai Lama’s visits and has politely requested an explanation from the government of Mongolia. Because of this, some researchers maintain that the Dalai Lama issue is a risk factor in Mongol-Chinese relations.<sup>88</sup> China is a conditional factor that should be considered in Mongolia’s official policy with the Dalai Lama.

Compared to Taiwan’s identity problem, Mongolia has two advantages. First, the Mongolian national identity is solid and based on nomadic tradition, Lamaist Buddhism and East European influences, which partially include a Soviet communist legacy.<sup>89</sup> Second, Mongolia is a homogeneous nation with a small Muslim Kazakh minority 5%,<sup>90</sup> which also shares nomadic traditions. Therefore, the salience of the Lamaist legacy does not polarize the political conflict in the country.

## **2. Politics: Identity and Peace**

Taiwan’s self identification dilemma is reflected in its national policies. Political parties directly or indirectly advance different national identities, which become the platforms of these parties’ policies regarding independence or unification. Analysis of

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<sup>86</sup> G. Andy Chang and T. Y. Wang, “Taiwanese or Chinese? Independence or Unification?: An Analysis of Generational Differences in Taiwan” *Journal of Asian and African Studies*. Vol. 40 (1/2) 36.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid., 40.

<sup>88</sup> Batbayar, 150; Bayarkhuu Dashdorj, “Security of Mongolia and Tibetan Geopolitics [in Mongolian],” *International Studies* no.4, 2003.

<sup>89</sup> Munkh-Ochir 2003.

<sup>90</sup> CIA World Factbook, “Mongolia” in *CIA The World Factbook*, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/mg.html#People> (accessed June 5, 2007).

Taiwanese politics and the identity dilemma provide a useful example with which to compare Mongolian politics that are likely to advance different arguments in support of or in opposition to the Dalai Lama's reincarnation in the country.

Taiwan's independence policy and Taiwan's identity issue have risen with the collapse of the oppressive KMT regime. The Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) developed the independence and identity issue as its main platform. The independence issue was ambiguous in the early stages of DPP formation. The Formosa Faction within the DPP decided to take a political risk and bring the independence claim to the agenda. The 1991 National Assembly election changed the DPP's radical position, and in 1996 the PRC military threat during Taiwan's presidential election gradually slowed the independence claim to the pragmatic grassroots level. During this same period, discussion about military reform and economic strategy began.<sup>91</sup> The election of Chen Shui-bian to the presidency in 2000 was a turning point for Taiwanese politics. Chen Shui-bian was a DPP candidate who promised independence.

President Chen's foreign policy since 2000 has been too radical and runs the risk of war for his country. As the Culture University poll shows, only 35% of people are ready to defend Taiwan and to risk war for independence. The vast majority of Taiwanese prefer peace over independence.<sup>92</sup>

In contrast to the DPP's radical independence policy, both the KMT and PFP support the peaceful unification of Taiwan with mainland China. However, they do not rely directly on the Chinese identity; perhaps because the number of Chinese identifiers has significantly decreased in the past decade. A direct advancement of the Chinese identity would therefore shrink the parties' electorates. The KMT promises stability in the Taiwan Strait, while still advocating unification, a policy that relies on the Chinese identity of Taiwanese. Maintaining the *status quo* is often equated with peace in Taiwan. The *status quo* also includes the balance of power in the strait, at least according to some DPP-leaning analysts. The Pan Blue faction in the Legislative Yuan, comprised of KMT and PFP, effectively blocked the Taiwan-U.S. air defense missile trade, which had the

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<sup>91</sup> Shelley Rigger, *From Opposition To Power: Taiwan's Democratic Progressive Party*, (Boulder, London: Lynne Rienner Publisher, 2001) 131.

<sup>92</sup> Robert S. Ross, 146

potential to affect the military balance in the strait and potentially provoke a war. They argue that the purchase could be viewed as a hostile step toward independence, even though the purchase of missiles does not necessarily express a declaration of independence.<sup>93</sup>

The reason for increasing support of the KMT is the electorates' unrest from the DPP's radical competitive policy towards independence, which has a destabilizing effect on cross-strait relations. Polls, which were taken after KMT chairman Lien's trip to the PRC, show that 46 percent believed that the KMT was the party most capable of handling cross-strait relations, as opposed to only 9.4 percent who believed that the DPP was more capable.<sup>94</sup> These numbers clearly demonstrate the electorates' preference of stability in the strait, as well as the decreased DPP approval rate.

The same polarization of political parties may be observed in Mongolia regarding the Dalai Lama's reincarnation in Mongolia. Supporters and opponents of the Dalai Lama would likely advance different arguments just as Taiwanese pro-independence and pro-unification parties do. Supporters of the Dalai Lama argue that the government should be responsive to the people's demands<sup>95</sup> and may advance the religious identity of the nation. The opponents' argument is that the national security would be threatened by Chinese interests if Ulaanbaatar supported the Dalai Lama,<sup>96</sup> thus advancing peace and security instead of national identity. Political contest between supporters and opponents of the Dalai Lama within the domestic politics of Mongolia would likely resemble those of Taiwan.

China uses Taiwan's open and pluralist political system to extinguish Taiwan's claim to independence. The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) cooperates with the KMT and the PFP, both of which advance the unification policy. KMT chairman Lien and PFP leader James Soong visited China, following an invitation by CCP, and met PRC

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<sup>93</sup> Steve Chan, "Taiwan in 2005: Strategic Interaction in the Two-Level Game," *Asian Survey*, vol.46, no. 1, (Jan-Feb, 2006), 66.

<sup>94</sup> Ross, 145.

<sup>95</sup> Bat-Uuel Erdene (Member of Parliament) in discussion with the author, February 2, 2007, Zorig Foundation Office, Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia.

<sup>96</sup> Batbayar, 150,

President Hu Jintao in 2005.<sup>97</sup> Hu and Lien agreed to oppose “Taiwan Independence.”<sup>98</sup> Furthermore, the KMT and the CCP agreed to exchange party cadres in order to “boost cultural and trade ties across the Straits.”<sup>99</sup>

Such cooperation has become a target of criticism by pro-independence groups. DPP officials such as Lai I-Chung see the CCP invitation of Pan Blue members as the classic example of the “divide and conquer strategy.”<sup>100</sup> The KMT was accused of being China’s instrument to disrupt domestic Taiwanese politics.

Cooperation with anti-Dalai Lama parties might be an option for the PRC if the Dalai Lama reincarnates in Mongolia, as this case shows. Mongolia is an open and pluralist democracy just like Taiwan. Every political party and NGO has the freedom to cooperate with any domestic and foreign counterpart in order to pursue its specific interests. National sovereignty and borders do little to prevent this cooperation as long as the government respects basic human rights and freedom of association.

## **B. EXTERNAL FACTORS**

As small powers, both Mongolia and Taiwan are vulnerable to the policies of and therefore have the same strategy of external balancing to maximize their respective interests in international politics. Taiwan relies heavily on the United States to counter the overwhelming Chinese military threat. Mongolia attempts to reach beyond its two neighbors to a “third neighbor,” from its classic sandwiched buffer position. Taiwan’s current geo-strategic situation and its strategy provide insight into Mongolia’s status as a small power under direct Chinese threat – a situation Ulaanbaatar may encounter if the Dalai Lama’s reincarnation takes place in Mongolia.

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<sup>97</sup> Kerry Dumbaugh, 7.

<sup>98</sup> China Daily, “CPC, KMT Work for Formal End of Cross-Strait Hostility,” *China Daily* April 29, 2005, [http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/english/doc/2005-04/29/content\\_438686.htm](http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/english/doc/2005-04/29/content_438686.htm) (accessed June 5, 2007).

<sup>99</sup> “Chinese KMT to Exchange Party Cadres with CPC,” *People’s Daily Online*, August 18, 2005. [http://english.people.com.cn/200508/18/eng20050818\\_203093.html](http://english.people.com.cn/200508/18/eng20050818_203093.html) (accessed June 5, 2007).

<sup>100</sup> Buckley, 2005.

## 1. External Military Threat

Taiwan's position is more advantageous than Mongolia's in terms of military power, geographic location, and access to assistance from other great powers. It is surrounded by a large amount of water, making it difficult to reach from the mainland. It also has a powerful economy that can fully support its military expansion.

A large body of water requires the aggressor to have a power projection capacity. Scholars still debate whether the PLA is capable of invading Taiwan. Bates Gill and Michael O'Hanlon argue that the Chinese military is not a real threat, because its defense budget is not sufficient to achieve its ambitious military reform, and China does not have a reliable power projection ability.<sup>101</sup> James Lilley and Carl Ford disagree, maintaining that the Chinese budget focuses on military modernization, which in fact means that the budget is sufficient. Furthermore, China's "old" logistic system does not necessarily equal "bad." For example, China organized a successful amphibious attack on Parcel Island of South Vietnam in 1974.<sup>102</sup>

A comparison between a possible amphibious assault in the Taiwan Strait and the WWII Normandy operation provides some insight regarding this possibility. Normandy was the world's largest amphibious attack, and a Chinese attack across the Taiwan Strait would be quite similar in its geographical scope. However, the correlation of forces would be less favorable for the attacking force.<sup>103</sup> China has inferior means of amphibious transportation, fewer combat aircrafts, and fewer warships than the Normandy assault forces in 1945. In contrast, Taiwan has more fighter aircrafts and troops to meet the aggressor. Furthermore, Taiwan has about 40 warships patrolling the Taiwan Strait, unlike D-day Germany, which had no naval presence. Moreover, China would have to obtain air superiority before launching an amphibious attack. Germany had no air reconnaissance over Normandy, unlike the Taiwan Strait, over which U.S. intelligence satellites fly and control.<sup>104</sup> Whether an air, seaborne, or combined assault,

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<sup>101</sup> Gill and O'Hanlon, 201-209.

<sup>102</sup> Lilley and Ford, 210-218.

<sup>103</sup> Global Security, "Taiwan vs. Normandy," *Global Security*.  
<http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/ops/taiwan-d-day.htm> (accessed on 13/08/06).

<sup>104</sup> Ibid.

there would be no guarantee that China would successfully conquer Taiwan.<sup>105</sup> Even if the PLA had the same capacity as Allied Forces had in Normandy, it could not be guaranteed a victory.

The key Chinese advantage is its ability to carry out a missile attack. The PLA has deployed about 200 missiles in the Taiwan Strait, which target political and economic centers; crucial infrastructures, such as oil pipelines, roads, rail and transportation networks; major military staging areas; and deployed military formations.<sup>106</sup> An overwhelming missile attack could not be neutralized even with the two Aegis ships that Taiwan has proposed to buy from the United States. O'Hanlon, however, asserts that China's missiles are not accurate enough to destroy the defending force's vital military facilities.<sup>107</sup>

China's military reform is making a tremendous effort to acquire a new generation of weapons in order to catch up to advanced nations; however, it lacks the conceptual development to wage a large scale amphibious assault. The PLA does not have adequate capacity to project enough power to immediately win a war. Reform is haphazard and uneven from service to service, which slows down this transition.<sup>108</sup>

In response, Taiwan aims to keep its technological advantage and gain a missile defense system to counter China. Taiwan's Armed Forces' weaponry is a good match against the PLA; however, the PLA's rapid advancement threatens Taiwan's current technological advantage. China's ballistic missile arsenal challenges the country's defense system.

Taiwan has enough economic power to successfully accomplish military reform and arms modernization to adequately respond to the PRC's challenge; however such reform faces a number of restraints. First of all, Taiwan's military reform must be self-sufficient, since the United States is so cautious about arms sales with Taiwan.

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<sup>105</sup> Micheal O'Hanlon, "Why China Cannot Conquer Taiwan," *International Studies*, vol. 25, no. 2 (Autumn 2000), 51-86.

<sup>106</sup> Larry Wortzel, "Taiwan's Strength Lies with Missiles," *Jane's Defense Weekly*, vol. 43, no. 3. (January 18, 2006), 23.

<sup>107</sup> O'Hanlon, 57.

<sup>108</sup> Christopher M. Farricker, *Chinese Military Modernization and the Future of Taiwan* (Master's Thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, 2003), 102.



Washington has rejected Taiwan's request for the High-speed Anti-Radiation Missiles (HARM) and Joint Direct Attack Munitions (JDAM) necessary to compensate its weakness against China.<sup>109</sup> Secondly, military reform in Taiwan has been blocked in the Legislative Yuan by the "Pan Blue" faction. It argues that Taiwan's military reform will change the status quo and destabilize the Taiwan Strait. China is less capable of invading Taiwan because of its weak power projection capacity; therefore, Taiwan is capable of defending itself relatively better than the defenders at Normandy in 1944. Unfortunately, China's rapid military reform, combined with Taiwan's slow reform, is gradually changing the military balance in favor of China.

Mongolia has two relative disadvantages when compared to Taiwan. First, unlike Taiwan, Mongolia shares a large land border with the PRC, which could be conducive to war.<sup>110</sup> The scenarios of an air and missile attack also apply to Mongolia, against which the Mongolian Armed Forces can do little with their current military capacity. Second, Ulaanbaatar lacks the sufficient economic means to catch up to the rapidly modernizing PLA.

Mongolia should learn two lessons from the military development in the Taiwan Strait. First, China would not hesitate to threaten the country with military power if it finds such action necessary. Ulaanbaatar may face the threat of a Chinese military invasion in the case of the Dalai Lama's reincarnation, Second, anti-Dalai Lama political parties may restrain attempts to reform the Mongolian if there is a confrontation between Mongolia and China that is similar to that of Taiwan and China.

## **2. Economic Interdependence**

Regardless of their respective levels of economic development, both Mongolia and Taiwan are becoming more dependent on the Chinese economy. The negative impact that Taipei's economic interdependence with Beijing has had on Taiwan's independence claim does not bode well for Mongolia and its economic dependence on China should a confrontation arise.

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<sup>109</sup> Wendel Minnick, "US Rejects Taiwan Request for HARM and JDAM Kits," *Jane's Defense Weekly*, vol. 43, no. 3 (January 18, 2006), 13.

<sup>110</sup> Sample, 679.

Cross-strait economic relations are booming and there have been changes in the political balance between pro-independence to pro-unification parties. According to the Bureau of Foreign Trade, “bilateral trade between Taiwan and China reached US\$33.9 billion” in “the first five months of 2006.” This is “20% of Taiwan’s total foreign trade and a 14.3% growth compared to the same period last year.”<sup>111</sup> A Taiwan think tank poll shows that 50.7% of 1072 respondents support “developing exchanges with the mainland,” as opposed to 38.7%, who prefer developing economic relations with other countries. Hsu Yung-ming, a researcher of “Academia Sinica,” concludes that “it shows Taiwan people have high hopes for cross-Straits relations.”<sup>112</sup> The KMT asserts that President Chen does not pay sufficient attention to the needs of Taiwan’s business community, referring to the DPP’s restrictions on contact with China.<sup>113</sup> The cross-strait business interests support the KMT platform to cancel the DPP restrictions and restore the three direct links between China and Taiwan.

Many different political strategies were proposed to regulate cross-strait economic relations by pro-independence political leaders for about two decades. Lee Teng-hui declared that the “Go South” policy was not successful enough to divert the Taiwanese investment flow to China. “Investment cycles in China, the Southeast Asian financial crisis, U.S. economic condition, and economic hardship of Taiwan” are the main factors that make such a policy unrealistic. These factors “were important to strategic business calculation in the 1990’s and will be into early 2000’s.”<sup>114</sup> Considering these realities, no such restriction can effectively be implemented. Hsu Hsin-liang, the leader of the Formosa Faction of the party, declared a policy under the slogan “Go West Boldly” against President Lee’s “Go South” policy. The intended strategy was to make Taiwan

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<sup>111</sup> Bureau of Foreign Trade *Taiwan Reports Current Trade with China*, Bureau of Foreign Trade, (2006), [https://www.opensource.gov/portal/server.pt/gateway/PTARGS\\_0\\_0\\_4619\\_239\\_0\\_43/http%3B/apps.opensource.gov%3B7011/opensource.gov/content/Display/6302166?action=advancedSearch&highlightQuery=eJzT0AhJzCxPzFNw9HNRCM7IzEvUVAj3DPHw9FNw9g%2F1CwmK1ARLaWgouSbn5%2BXnZiYrKfgHKSj55OemFpdKJiugCnvmlaQW5SSWWZObnJeYg5OCghvgHeDprAgBNDyRw&fileSize=3876](https://www.opensource.gov/portal/server.pt/gateway/PTARGS_0_0_4619_239_0_43/http%3B/apps.opensource.gov%3B7011/opensource.gov/content/Display/6302166?action=advancedSearch&highlightQuery=eJzT0AhJzCxPzFNw9HNRCM7IzEvUVAj3DPHw9FNw9g%2F1CwmK1ARLaWgouSbn5%2BXnZiYrKfgHKSj55OemFpdKJiugCnvmlaQW5SSWWZObnJeYg5OCghvgHeDprAgBNDyRw&fileSize=3876).

<sup>112</sup> Yan Lei ed., “Taiwan People Favor Developing Exchange with Mainland: Survey,” *China View*, August 17, 2006 Xinhua Online [http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2006-08/17/content\\_4974581.htm](http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2006-08/17/content_4974581.htm) (accessed June 5, 2007).

<sup>113</sup> Dumbaugh, 4.

<sup>114</sup> Karen M. Sutter, “Business Dynamics across the Taiwan Strait: The Implications for Cross- Strait Relations,” *Asian Survey*, vol. 42, no. 3, (May-June, 2002), 525.

“a bridge between China and the world,” in terms of the economy, and “give both Chinese and foreign firms incentives to discourage PRC aggression.”<sup>115</sup> The New Tide Faction did not accept the “Go West Boldly” slogan and provided the somewhat compromised platform, “Strengthen the Base and Go West.”<sup>116</sup> Discussion, however, ended with the victory of radical factions and with restriction posed on Taiwanese investment in China; however, these restrictions have been gradually relaxed due to harsh political critics from opposition parties and business communities.

Redirecting the economic trend of increasing dependence on China is not a realistic option for Mongolia, as the case of Taiwan illustrates. Even with a strong economy, Taiwan has achieved little with its “Go South” policy and economic restrictions on its investment to China. Seeking opportunities from this rapidly growing interdependence, therefore, as become a viable option for Taiwan, which could also be useful for poor Mongolia.

Taiwan may find that cooperation with China has a positive impact on its security. For a small power, such cooperation is “the best defense when your rivals are cooperating in a multilateral relative gains world,” as Duncan Snidal explains.<sup>117</sup> Taiwan gains less than China, since investment in China is investment in its national budget. This investment eventually goes towards its military, which is dangerous for Taiwan in a possible zero-sum competition. Not cooperating with China, however, may enable China to “turn elsewhere and gain even greater relative advantages over Taiwan.”<sup>118</sup> “Defensive cooperation” with China, therefore, is the best option for Taipei.

The economic interdependence across the Taiwan Strait may also pose new questions about the actual agenda rather than the independence or reunification issues. Karen M. Sutter has the same analytical framework as Ming Wan, who analyzed the relationship between economic interdependence and regional security, and concluded that

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<sup>115</sup> Rigger, 131.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid.

<sup>117</sup> Deng, “Taiwan’s Restriction of Investment in China,” 979.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid., 979.

interdependence mitigates the conflict and eventually ensures security.<sup>119</sup> The politicians will share the same priority of stability in the strait, from which both sides benefit. Such interest can already be observed in Taiwan's domestic politics. The policy of diversion of Taiwanese investment from China to Southeast Asia has already failed.<sup>120</sup>

Indeed, Taiwanese businessmen find corresponding interests from the PRC government. The priority of the third generation of Chinese leaders is domestic economic prosperity. They focus on strengthening cross-strait economic interdependence. This economic tie is useful for stability of capital investment, and moreover, helpful to resolving the cross-strait issue in a peaceful way. Meanwhile, their main concern is the current DPP leaders' policy towards independence, which may lead to war and "delay" and "disrupt" the economic development.<sup>121</sup>

The political and economic trends diverge, though.<sup>122</sup> On the one hand, Taiwanese companies have worked out their strategy in the South and to the West, despite politics and security concerns. "Some enterprises," as the Council of Economic Planning and Development notes, "are creating a 'win-win' situation, as people can take advantage of China's abundant human resources to compensate for the shortage in the Southeast Asian countries."<sup>123</sup> On the other hand, since the two countries have joined the WTO, little has changed. The positive political prognoses for the two countries with regard to WTO membership has not become a reality. The membership has put no end to the DPP proposed investment restriction on the PRC, which would promote deeper integration, as Ping Deng predicted.<sup>124</sup> As Sutter found out from conversations with academics from Taiwan's Institute of International Relations, Taiwan would have

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<sup>119</sup> Wan Ming, "Economic Interdependence and Economic Cooperation: Mitigating Conflict and Transforming Security Order in Asia," in *Asia's Security Order: Instrumental and Normative Features*. ed. Muthuah Alagappa, (Palo Alto, California: Stanford University Press, 2003), 280-310.

<sup>120</sup> Sutter, 522-540.

<sup>121</sup> Tan Chen-yuang, "An Assessment of China's Taiwan Policy under the Third Generation Leadership," *Asian Survey*, vol. 45, no. 3, (May/June 2005), 359.

<sup>122</sup> Sanders, 987-989.

<sup>123</sup> Tsai Ting-I, "Asia Times: Part 2: Taiwan Businesses Diverting from PRC to Southeast Asia," [https://www.opensource.gov/portal/server.pt/gateway/PTARGS\\_0\\_0\\_4619\\_239\\_0\\_43/http%3B/apps.opensource.gov%3B7011/opensource.gov/content/Display/6319535?action=advancedSearch&highlightQuery=eJzT0AhJzCxPzFNw9HNRcM7IzEvUVAj3DPHw9FNw9g%2F1CwmK1ARLaWgouSbn5%2BXnZiYrKfgHKSj55OemFpdKJiugCnvmlaQW5SWWZObnJeYg5OCGhvgHeDprAgBNdyRw&fileSize=12559](https://www.opensource.gov/portal/server.pt/gateway/PTARGS_0_0_4619_239_0_43/http%3B/apps.opensource.gov%3B7011/opensource.gov/content/Display/6319535?action=advancedSearch&highlightQuery=eJzT0AhJzCxPzFNw9HNRcM7IzEvUVAj3DPHw9FNw9g%2F1CwmK1ARLaWgouSbn5%2BXnZiYrKfgHKSj55OemFpdKJiugCnvmlaQW5SWWZObnJeYg5OCGhvgHeDprAgBNdyRw&fileSize=12559).

<sup>124</sup> Deng, 979.

continued its restrictions, and Beijing would not have raised a trade dispute against Taipei “in a multilateral setting.”<sup>125</sup> Even the WTO memberships of the two countries and their deepening economic interdependence could not provide incentives for resolving political issues.

Sino-Taiwanese economic interdependence enhances unification rather than independence, and it provides no political rapprochement. This provides two lessons for Mongolia. First, the failed “Go South” policy illustrates that redirection of economic interdependence is not an option for Mongolia. Indeed, no mighty economic power that can unilaterally balance the Chinese economic expansion has been seen in Taiwan’s case. Second, Mongolia should take advantage of its increasing economic dependence on China, as the strategies for Taiwan have recommended. The economic importance of Mongolia might change PRC’s coercive policy if the countries found themselves in political confrontation.

### **3. International Support**

External balancing of Taiwan is specific to its unique situation. Two factors make Taiwan different from Mongolia in terms of foreign policy: Taiwan is not a sovereign country and Taiwan is losing its buffer status. These differences dictate the specifics of Taiwan’s policy for international support for its independence through external balancing. A careful look at the U.S. attitude towards Taiwan reveals what action Ulaanbaatar should take.

Taiwan is not a sovereign nation recognized by the wider international community, but U.S. military assistance guarantees its status quo. Taipei, therefore, heavily relies on U.S. support. In the same way, it pursues its claim of independence by counting on U.S. military assistance even though Washington hesitates to support the claim. This is seen as “pressing for a unilateral change in the status quo,”<sup>126</sup> which requires the United States to risk war. The U.S. goal in the region is not defending Taiwan, but ensuring peace and preventing war. Washington has complex interests in

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<sup>125</sup> Sutter, 538.

<sup>126</sup> Michael D. Swaine, “Trouble in Taiwan,” *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 83, no. 2, (March-April, 2004), 39-49.

both China and Taiwan and does not want to give up one for the other. It will simultaneously lose all of its interests in both sides if a war starts in the Taiwan Strait. To pacify both sides, Washington proposes that “Taiwan should not be moving towards independence; and mainland China should not be moving towards the use of force or coercion.”<sup>127</sup> The United States believes it can prevent a war and maintain its interests if it remains tied to both sides.

Taipei’s radical steps towards independence have gradually pushed the United States against China. This push has been a target of harsh U.S. criticism. Michael D. Swain blames Taiwan’s leaders for destabilizing regional security and risking U.S.-China relations. He criticizes the pro-Taiwan arguments in the U.S. Congress and argues that there is no reason to support Taiwan’s independence. Self-determination of any people is not sufficient for independence, as is evident in the cases of Chechnya, Kashmir, Kosovo and Tibet--and Taiwan is no exception to this. “At the present, the most immediate threat to such (U.S. deterrence of China not to use force) a policy is presented by the actions of President Chen,”<sup>128</sup> he concludes. The question is whether U.S. interest in Taiwan is worth defending.

Taiwanese interest for independence mismatches U.S. interest in the region; therefore, Taipei’s slow pressing on the United States causes Washington to resume its relative power and reconsider its strategy in the region to ensure peace and prevent war. Mongolia should be cautious about relying on a single great power to advance its interest, and it should thoroughly consider the goals and interests of great powers that support it. Otherwise, the country could easily lose its support.

Although the United States is a single superpower in the world, it has its relative limits as well. Whether Washington can deter China is debatable. Ross is very confident that Washington can easily deter China for “many decades.”<sup>129</sup> With regard to both countries’ nuclear and conventional armament and technological capacities, Washington can easily deter Beijing from taking an aggressive step. Christensen, however, disagrees..

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<sup>127</sup> Shirley A. Kan, “China/Taiwan: Evolution of the ‘One China’ Policy – Key Statements from Washington, Beijing and Taipei,” *CRS Report for Congress* (June 1, 2004), 10.

<sup>128</sup> Michael D. Swaine, 39 – 49.

<sup>129</sup> Ross, 80.

He points out the deficiencies of understanding “a peer competitor.” In terms of global deployment of its forces and technological state of art, China does match the United States; however, it will challenge Washington anywhere, if it perceives a threat.<sup>130</sup> It can easily take advantage of its proximity, concentration of conventional forces and human casualty acceptance character. The United States, however, has its forces distributed throughout the world and is sensitive to casualties.

Washington is concerned about the U.S. strategy for achieving stability in the Taiwan Strait. Strategic ambiguity, such as the Janus-Faced Foe type of pivotal deterrence, where “each adversary will be deterred if (and only if) it thinks that the pivot will align against it,”<sup>131</sup> currently prevents Beijing from going to war, because the United States would defend Taiwan. Taiwan’s current radical policy towards independence, on the one hand, challenges the strategic ambiguity. The downfall of this strategy is that it could “encourage the two sides to take risks” and “blunder into war.”<sup>132</sup> Indeed, Taiwan’s miscalculation of U.S. alignment or misunderstanding of its message by both sides could lead to war. On other hand, a strategic clarity policy “will invite from both sides the maximum degree of pressure and political maneuvering possible, within those thresholds.”<sup>133</sup>

Taipei’s reliance on Washington and Taiwan’s pressure on the United States provides Mongolia with an example of what it should and should not do. First, Mongolia should not rely on a single great power. Taiwan is not a sovereign country and this disadvantage certainly limits its political allies and causes it to rely heavily on the United States. A negative side of this reliance is that it limits Taipei’s options of manipulation and locks it into a triangular Sino-U.S.-Taiwan relationship. Mongolia, an independent and sovereign nation, has more options than Taiwan. Ulaanbaatar’s “third neighbor” policy increases the number of allies and extends its cooperation beyond its neighbors. Second, Mongolia’s policy should be consistent. Taiwanese claim to independence seems

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<sup>130</sup> Christensen, 14.

<sup>131</sup> Timothy W. Crawford, *Pivotal Deterrence: Third – Party Statecraft and Pursuit of Peace* (Ithaca, London: Cornell University Press, 2003), 7.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid., 200.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid., 110.

to be an unilateral change of the status quo in the Taiwan Strait that challenges its ally's strategy. Because of Taiwan's changing policy, the United States had to reconsider its capacity and strategy. Washington's refusal to sell Taiwan HARM and JDAM missile defense systems is another example of U.S. policy to maintain strategic ambiguity and discourage current Taiwanese leaders. Mongolia's support of the reincarnated Dalai Lama should not be treated as a sudden change of its policy if the country pursues its current commitment to democracy, human rights and freedom, and active international participation.

### **C. CONCLUSION**

The case of Taiwan provides useful insight for Mongolia regarding the possible development of internal and external factors if Ulaanbaatar finds itself threatened by China.. Taiwan is an example of a small democratic power that tries to maximize its interest by manipulating the interests of great powers.

The threat of China plays a conditional role in voters' preferences regarding Taiwanese independence policy, which would likely be the same for Mongolia's decisions on whether to support the Dalai Lama's reincarnation. Today's Taiwanese domestic politics, in which different parties advance different identities for different cause, may likely be replayed in Mongolia.

Ulaanbaatar can do little single-handedly about the military and economic balance with China. Taiwan fares relatively better in terms of its geo-strategic location and economic development, which should strengthen its main advantage of international recognition. Its status as a buffer state may shelter it from direct military and economic threats.

The PRC uses a two-fold policy with Taiwan in order to pursue its interests. Externally, it threatens Taiwan with a military invasion and commitment to war. U.S. reluctance to support the Taiwanese independence claim and military modernization leave Taiwan no choice but to abandon its claim, if not go to war. The growing economic power of China enables it to integrate Taiwan's economy deeper into its own, gaining more than Taiwan does from the relationship. Such asymmetric gains provide China an



opportunity to slowly advance over Taiwan and unify Taiwan, which is its ultimate goal. Internally, China cooperates with anti-independence opposition parties to isolate the pro-independence ruling party. The anti-independence and pro-cooperation platform of the KMT offers electorates security, stability and economic growth, as opposed to the DPP leaders, who run the risk leading their country to war. It is again China who gains more in these internal political dynamics than the Taiwanese independence movement.

China could likely pursue such a two-fold policy with Mongolia in the case of the Dalai Lama's reincarnation. However, Ulaanbaatar has advantages, such as Mongolia's sovereignty and independence, and its status as a buffer state, which could risk Beijing's relations with Russia and other countries.

#### IV. DILEMMA BETWEEN DEMOCRACY AND SECURITY

As a small power, Mongolia is vulnerable to the policy of larger powers. It must struggle with its geo-strategic position between the two great powers on its borders, Russia and China. Mongolia's search for a "third neighbor" reflects its ambition to maximize its national interests by balancing a powerful virtual "third" against these two actual neighbors. Even in the context of such a strategy, such maximization cannot fundamentally contract the actual neighbors' interests. While many of these interests are geo-political, and thus subject to the power politics factors discussed in a previous chapter, other interests of Russia, China, *and* Mongolia stem from unique domestic and political contexts. This chapter will explore the role of religious identity in the power politics of Mongolia as it faces its large neighbor to the South.

Buddhism is deeply ingrained in Mongolian political culture today. This chapter will begin by describing the role of Buddhism in modern Ulaanbaatar politics. This religious identity can lead to deeply rooted conflict with the secular regime in Beijing, particularly if something heightens the salience of Buddhist identity in Mongolia. In order to consider this phenomenon, this chapter will also consider the case of a hypothetical reincarnation of the next Dalai Lama in Mongolia.<sup>134</sup> In the context of such an increased political salience of Buddhism, Ulaanbaatar will face a new dilemma of meeting the religious needs of its people and countering the threat from China. In such a case, international support—the third neighbor and others—will play a decisive role.

This chapter first analyzes domestic factors. The main variables that determine this small country's policy are the degree to which Mongolians are religious and how politicians view the possible reincarnation of the Dalai Lama. The 9<sup>th</sup> Jebtsundamba's visit to the country in 1999 provides an example of how these politics may develop in regard to the reincarnation scenario. Bogd Jebtsundamba Khan was the dual head of religion and state of the Bogd Khan Kingdom of Mongolia from 1911 to 1924, just as the Dalai Lama is for Tibet.

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<sup>134</sup> Buddhist salience in Mongolia after the collapse of the communist regime is rarely political. However, there are active political, social and religious groups that gradually advance the religious claim in politics, such as inviting the Bogd Jebtsundamba Khan. The Dalai Lama's frequent visits to Mongolia are the result of these groups. The religious claims in politics are not vivid, but strong.

To understand the implications of such a religious revival, one must also examine the perceptions and likely interests of outside players. Thus, issues such as military threats from China and economic dependence on China will also be considered. The country is not only a buffer state between Russia and China, but also a part of buffer culture between India and China. The second section will discuss the policies of these countries, along with U.S. policies.

## **A. DOMESTIC FACTORS**

A Buddhist resurgence has affected national policy persistently since Mongolia has become a democracy. Every time the Dalai Lama visits Mongolia, Ulaanbaatar explains that the government still recognizes Tibet as an integral part of the PRC, that the Dalai Lama's visit has nothing to do with politics, and that it is only a function of religious affairs, since Mongolia is a Lamaist country. In the case of a more extreme event, such as the 15th Dalai Lama's reincarnation in Mongolia, China would not likely be satisfied with this kind of explanation.

The following section examines three main aspects of the role of religion in the politics of Mongolia. The first section compares the 9<sup>th</sup> Jebtsundamba's visit to the possible political scenario of the Dalai Lama's future reincarnation in Mongolia. The next section looks at the relationship between Buddhism in Mongolian society and national identity. The final section examines political arguments of the supporters and opponents of the next Dalai Lama's reincarnation in Mongolia.

### **1. 9<sup>th</sup> Jebtsundamba's Visit to Mongolia in 1999**

Ninth Jetsun Dampa Jambal Namdol Choikya Gyaltzen is the 9th reincarnation of Jebtsundamba Rinpoche, whose 8th reincarnation was Bogd Khan of the Kingdom of Mongolia from 1911 to 1924. His only visit to Mongolia in 1999 triggered some minor tensions with the government of Mongolia. This tension and the consequent international effects are instructive for such events in the future.

There are some significant differences between the Jebtsundamba and the Dalai Lama. Jebtsundamba was a king of Mongolia, but his current reincarnation enjoys

relatively less legitimacy and draws some suspicion. The Dalai Lama enjoys popular legitimacy in Mongolia, but was king of Mongolia,

There are also similarities between Jebtsundamba and the Dalai Lama.. Both are reincarnated monks and head of a national religion. Emperors of the Qing Dynasty historically treated them as equal. The previous incarnation of the Jebtsundamba led Mongolia toward independence together with the previous incarnation of the Dalai Lama, whose current incarnation struggles. It is necessary to examine the current Chinese pressure on the Mongolian government and the various domestic interest groups in order to predict the possible political developments in Mongolia in the case of the Dalai Lama's reincarnation.

*a. Lamas, Officials and Politics*

Jebtsundamba's visit to Mongolia was a result of eight years of persistence on the part of believers. The geo-strategic environment of the early 1990's determined Mongolia's policy with the 9th Jebtsundamba. The government of Mongolia refused to issue a visa for the 9th Jebtsundamba in early 1991, when he was recognized by the Dalai Lama as the 10th reincarnation of Jebtsundamba lineage. The intent was to avoid harming the warming Mongol-Chinese relations following the exchange of visits of the two heads of states - Mr. Punsalmaa Ochirbat's visit in 1990 and Mr. Yang Shangkun's visit in 1991.<sup>135</sup> Mongolia's geo-strategic situation was not good in those days: it had been drafting its new constitution towards democracy since late 1989; the Soviet Union had collapsed with its security guarantee and withdrawn its troops; and the PRC had demonstrated its intolerance with democracy in 1989 at Tiananmen Square. At this critical moment, inviting the previous religious king may have had serious security implications.

At the time, the Buddhist resurgence was strong and a number of people represented such religious interests. The Center of Mongolian Buddhists, an NGO, was comprised of politicians, including Mr. O. Dashbalbar, leader of United Traditional Party; Mr. Ninj, an active leader of the Democratic Union; and other activists. They

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<sup>135</sup> Batbayar, 126-127.

lobbied for the authority to invite the 9<sup>th</sup> Jebtsundamba to Mongolia.<sup>136</sup> The Center officially requested a visa for the 9<sup>th</sup> Jebtsundamba several times. Yo Amgalan, Deputy Abbot of the Gandantegchilin Monastery, said “we have received no response.”<sup>137</sup>

The religious lobby was finally able to welcome the Jebtsundamba to Mongolia. He had allegedly obtained a visa from the Mongolian Consulate in Elstei, Republic of Khalmik, Russia, which was awaiting parliamentary approval for its opening. New Councilor Budbazar issued the visa under the name of Jambal, the given name of the actual person of 9th Jebtsundamba’s reincarnation.<sup>138</sup>

His arrival in Mongolia accidentally coincided with President Jiang Zemin’s official three-day visit to Mongolia.<sup>139</sup> Just after Jiang’s departure, Jebtsundamba had announced his visit to Mongolia. Abbots of monasteries enthroned him to Head of Mongolian Lamaism at the Erdenezuu monastery in Karakorum, a town that had been the capital of the Mongol Empire.<sup>140</sup>

As Head of Mongolian Lamaism, the Jebtsundamba founded the Religious Assembly, which consisted of heads of monasteries supporting him for accession. He established the Religious Administration, which consisted of seven Ministers and a body that has an executive power in temporal affairs. Ministers included both religious and non-religious figures, one of whom was Mr. Budbazar, the diplomat who had issued him the visa. Ninj, a leader of one of the small factions of the Democratic Union, required the government to grant Mongolian citizenship to Jebtsundamba.<sup>141</sup>

This action threatened the secular government of Mongolia, as some officials and analysts had predicted, and the government enforced the 1995 National

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<sup>136</sup> Bayarkhuu Dashdorj (Professor, Natinal University of Mongolia) in discussion with the author, January 31, 2007, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia. He was on a diplomatic mission in India when the 9<sup>th</sup> Jebtsundamba visited Mongolia and was enthroned as Head of Mongolian Lamaism in 1999. As an academician, Professor Bayarkhuu is considered one of the leading Central Asia analysts and served in the Embassy of Mongolia in India.

<sup>137</sup> Geraldine Fagan. “Mongolia: Authority Thwart the Return of Buddhist King” *Forum 18*, November 27, 2003. World Wide Religious News. <http://wwwn.org/article.php?idd=12109&sec=52&con=23> (accessed March 8, 2007).

<sup>138</sup> Bayarkhuu in discussion.

<sup>139</sup> Fagan, 2003.

<sup>140</sup> Batbayar, 150.

<sup>141</sup> Bayarkhuu in discussion.

Security Council Resolution to expel Jebtsundamba from the country. “The government was on the edge of being overthrown,” Professor Bayarkhuu explains.<sup>142</sup> Jebtsundamba has seemingly attempted to overthrow the national government and re-establish a theocracy, claiming the throne of Mongolian Khan, which had been his legitimate status in his previous life. The Religious Assembly and the Religious Administration resembled an establishment of a parallel structure with government power. The Religious Administration was modeled after the Tibetan government-in-exile.<sup>143</sup>

The accidental timing of Jebtsundamba’s visit during Jiang Zemin’s visit doubled the security concern. The “Chinese thought it had been organized specially and demanded that he be sent back within 24 hours,” Samdan Tsedendamba said in a *Forum 18* interview. <sup>144</sup> The Mongolian government insisted that Jebtsundamba had a tourist visa and had traveled by private capacity “just like any tourist.”<sup>145</sup>

Government officials, especially the National Security Council and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, played primary roles in resisting him and expelling him back to India, where he currently resides. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs refused to issue a Mongolian visa to the 9<sup>th</sup> Jebtsundamba, apparently in accordance with the National Security Council’s secret resolution of 1995. This resolution was allegedly initiated by the Minister of Culture and supported by the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the National Security Council, consisting of the President, the Prime Minister and the Speaker of Parliament.<sup>146</sup> The National Security Council and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs took an initiative. Jebtsundamba Rinpoche eventually gave up and returned back to India.<sup>147</sup>

The media and politicians felt less threatened by Jebtsundamba. The media covered his visit in a relatively low-key manner. Politicians considered the visit of little significance compared it to the political competitions of the days. Members of

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<sup>142</sup> Bayarkhuu in discussion.

<sup>143</sup>. Bayarkhuu in discussion

<sup>144</sup> Fagan, 2003.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid.

<sup>146</sup> Bayarkhuu in discussion.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid.

parliament were focused on a government cabinet resignation, and not on a reincarnated monk's visit.<sup>148</sup> Scholars and researchers weren't aware of the contemporary developments in Karakorum.<sup>149</sup>

Expelling Jebtsundamba was not a covert operation led by the security and diplomatic services, since heads of all important monasteries were involved and appointed to the important positions of the Religious Assembly and Administration. The lack of attention may have been due to other political developments at the time. The year of 1998 was a turbulent year in Mongolian politics; it included two government cabinet resignations and the very first assassination, which was allegedly political. Furthermore, the media was focusing on the recent visit of Jiang Zheming and the Prime Minister's corruption scandal, which later led to the resignation of his cabinet.<sup>150</sup>

***b. Observation and Implication in Dalai Lama Scenario***

This case reveals two interesting points that are relevant to the possible 15<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama's reincarnation: the position of Mongolia with regard to religious heads of Lamaism and the 9<sup>th</sup> Jebtsundamba's political ambitions, which the opposition assume to be the Dalai Lama's.

On the one hand, politicians and officials were not responsive to the people's religious needs as a democratic government should be if the support was so significant. Samdan Tsendendamba concluded that "we learnt that Mongolians were much closer to the issue of Bogdo Gegen (Jebtsundamba) than we thought."<sup>151</sup> The government of Mongolia partially violated the constitutional principle of respecting religion. A government should respect the basic human rights and freedom of belief. Election of the

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<sup>148</sup> Mrs. Hulan Hashbat in discussion; Mr. Bat-Uuel Erdene in discussion. Both of them were members of parliament at the time and both of them acknowledged they had little interest in the visit. . Mr. Bat-Uuel was also a member of the Standing Committee on National Security and Foreign Policy. Bold Ravdan, the secretary of National Security Council at the time, still considers that the issue had little significance, although he frequently had meetings with leaders of monasteries. Officials, who dealt with Jebtsundamba daily, could have experienced more pressure.

<sup>149</sup> Shurkhuu in discussion.

<sup>150</sup> Hulan in discussion.

<sup>151</sup> Fagan, 2003..

supreme religious leader by the heads of monasteries is not a government business and the elected religious leader should be accepted by the government.

The officials were extremely suspicious of Jebtsundamba's activities regarding the Religious Administration. Once the Jebtsundamba was officially recognized by heads of monasteries as a Head of Religion, the establishment of the Religious Assembly and Administration was necessary to administer the religious affairs; this fact cannot be explained solely as a challenge for the legitimate government of Mongolia. Staff and bureaucracy are fundamental to an effective administration. The Bogd Khan 8<sup>th</sup> Jebtsundamba was indeed the head of two different parallel administrations - Government of Cabinet, a secular administration in charge of national policy, and Erdeneshanzudov Cabinet, a religious administration in charge of religious affairs. Samdan Tsendendamba explains that in 1921, the 8<sup>th</sup> Jebtsundamba's political power was completely delegated to civilian politicians, and he retained his absolute power only in religious affairs.<sup>152</sup>

On the one hand, there are some valid arguments against the 9<sup>th</sup> Jebtsundamba's political ambitions. He and his political and religious allies made persistent efforts to visit Mongolia, which showed his vested interest in Mongolia, whether it was political or purely religious. His acquisition of a visa demonstrated that the Jebtsundamba's supporters were strong and active.

The government of Mongolia and Tibetan government-in-exile have different views of the Dalai Lama's role in Jebtsundamba's visit. Batbayar called Jebtsundamba's visit a "plot of the Dalai Lama"<sup>153</sup> and Bayarkhuu pointed out that "the Dalai Lama called the Jebtsundamba Rinpoche, blaming him for his arbitrary actions and demanding that he apologize to the government of Mongolia."<sup>154</sup> In contrast, Tashi Wangdi, who was representative of His Holiness Dalai Lama at the time, maintains that the Dalai Lama "had nothing to do with the visit and we did not know that he (Jebtsundamba) was there until it was brought to our attention." He explains, "we also made it very clear that we had no influence over him. The question of His Holiness

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<sup>152</sup> Fagan, 2003..

<sup>153</sup> Batbayar, 150.

<sup>154</sup> Bayarkhuu in discussion.



calling him back, therefore, does not arise.”<sup>155</sup> Regarding the Dalai Lama’s call, he explains, “we (Embassy of Mongolia and the representatives of the Dalai Lama) had agreed to pass a request to him (Jebtsundamba) to reconsider his decision to extend his stay in Mongolia.”<sup>156</sup>

These contradictory comments illustrate how both sides were sensitive to this issue. The Dalai Lama’s interference in Mongolian domestic politics is doubtful, because he enjoys the most respect in Mongolia and it would definitely harm his reputation. Mongolian officials may have had two reasons for blaming the Dalai Lama for the Jebtsundamba’s visit. First, it may have been a way to show Mongolia’s “innocence” to Chinese officials.. The Jebtsundamba’s sudden visit risked Mongol-Chinese relations during the Jiang Zemin’s visit, which was the result of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs’ long-term efforts. Second, it may have been a preventive strategy to discourage similar actions that could take place in the future.

With regard to the possible reincarnation of the next Dalai Lama, the Jebtsundamba’s visit illustrates a political competition between the religious sympathizers and rational security concerns. Monasteries and other interest groups would likely support the reincarnated Dalai Lama as they did in the case of the Jebtsundamba, and government officials would be very sensitive to the reincarnation. Unlike the case of Jebtsundamba, the Dalai Lama’s reincarnation in Mongolia would raise a wider political discussion and the political parties would likely be regrouped and allied with their respective interest groups. The Jebtsundamba’s visit clearly demonstrates possible political developments in Mongolia in the case of the reincarnation of the next Dalai Lama.

## **2. How Religious is Mongolia?**

If a religious crisis between Mongolia and China escalated to the level of "you are with us or against us," Mongolia would have only two options -- ally with China against the Dalai Lama or counter China with the Dalai Lama. The outcome would depend on

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<sup>155</sup> Tashi Wangdi, e-mail correspondence to author, May 20, 2007.

<sup>156</sup> Ibid.

how religious Mongolians are and Mongolians' attitude towards Buddhism. Because of the scarcity of statistical data, it is important to examine the relationship between national identity and religion.

Mongolia has different cultural heritages determined by religion, ways of life, and historical legacy. Current Mongolian national identity has been shaped by Central Asian nomadic traditions, East Asian Buddhist civilization, and the Proletarian Internationalism model of Soviet and East European culture. Munkh-Ochir Dorjjugder identifies an identity problem, explaining, "As a nation, Mongolia faces the identity trilemma and security dilemma, without much preference given to any of these options during the last decade."<sup>157</sup>

The main influences of the nation's policy with regard to the Buddhist revival issue are the atheist culture derived from Communism and the nation's Buddhist heritage. If communist atheism were to prevail, Mongolia would join China against the Dalai Lama. If Buddhist heritage prevailed, Mongolia would support the Dalai Lama and withstand China.

*a. Communist Atheist Culture*

Atheism, is one of the integral parts of communist ideology, which ruled Mongolia for seventy years and had both positive and negative impacts. The negative impacts were apocalyptic for the Buddhist nature of the nation. The positive impacts, however, have driven Mongolia into the modern age.

Communism destroyed religion, and settlements emerged around the monasteries. Settled life was a "result of the conversion of the Mongols to Tibetan-style Buddhism."<sup>158</sup> During the Stalinist holocaust from 1937 to 1938, "more than twenty thousand persons were killed,"<sup>159</sup> the vast majority of which were monks, without any judicial proceedings. This was about 10% of the male population; assuming that half of

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<sup>157</sup> Munkh-Ochir 2003, v.

<sup>158</sup> Alicia J. Campi., "Nomadic Cultural Values and Their Influences on Modernization," in *Mongolia in Transition: Old Patterns, New Challenges*, ed. Ole Bruun and Ole Odgaard (Nordic Institute of Asian Studies, 1996), 99.

<sup>159</sup> Batbayar Bat-Erdene Baabar, *Twentieth Century Mongolia*, (Cambridge, UK: The White Horse Press, 1999), 369-400.

the population of 500,000 was male..<sup>160</sup> Eight hundred monasteries existed before 1921; all of them were destroyed. The ultimate goal of this destruction was to eliminate old feudal remnants and to lay down the ground for a new communist culture.<sup>161</sup>

This ideology continued to brainwash society for seventy years. New communist intellectuals emerged from the ruins of old tradition. They asserted that Buddhism was outdated and that it was the reason for Mongolian underdevelopment. Alan Sanders noted in 1966 that “there are now very few believers, and the last lamas in the country are now concentrated at Gandan in Ulan Bator,” referring to a mere 82 lamas in 1966.<sup>162</sup>

Mongolia’s communist heritage did not have solely negative outcomes. Communism was the driving force of Mongolian modernization and led to its identity of “East European-ness.” Munk-Ochir writes that “close ties with the most liberal-minded Communist nations, such as Poland, (former) Czechoslovakia and Hungary may have been a part of the Soviet strategy of driving Mongolia apart from its cultural heritage, but nonetheless the impact benefited Mongolia when it became the only Asian Communist nation to go through a peaceful revolution toward democracy.”<sup>163</sup>

#### ***b. Deep Buddhist Culture***

Despite the communist destruction and murder, Buddhism remained alive among the population. As Munkh-Ochir explains, Mongolia was never a theocracy like Tibet. Although the head of the nation of Bogd Khan Kingdom of Mongolia was a monk, the public and religious administrations were separate. Aristocracies ran local and government administrations. Many of the highest titles were given to military and government officials with common origin. Religious administration had its own cabinet

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<sup>160</sup> In I.Maysky’s calculation, “of total population in 1918 of 647,500, including 105,000 Chinese and Russians, there were 115, 000 lamas.” Alan J. Sanders, *The People’s Republic of Mongolia*, 66.

<sup>161</sup> Baabar, 369-400.

<sup>162</sup> Alan J.Sanders, 66

<sup>163</sup> Munkh-Ochir 2003, 57.

under the King; however, it was never mixed with public administration. Some individual monks were appointed to government positions, but they acted strictly as government officials, not religious officials.<sup>164</sup>

The highest monks cooperated with the communist government and sometimes became a tool of their policy. In 1950's, Mongolia restored two Buddhist monasteries to display communist respect of the basic human right of belief and practice of religion in order to join the United Nations. The World Buddhist Peace Conference was held in Ulaanbaatar in an effort to support the Soviet Union against the PRC. The conference blamed China for human rights violation in the early 1970's and discussed the Dalai Lama issue.<sup>165</sup> The communist government essentially used Buddhism for its own narrow purpose. Regardless of this goal, however, its efforts helped save Mongolian Buddhism.<sup>166</sup>

Religion was revived following the collapse of the communist regime; however, Buddhism could not regain the previous social significance that it had enjoyed in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The religion is still weak and in its infancy to some extent. Ajaa geegen, an Inner Mongolian reincarnated Rinpoche, who fled from China in response to the Panchen Lama's reincarnation dispute, finds a growing gap between society and religion in Mongolia. The reason for such a gap is that seventy years of communist rule has alienated people from their traditional religion. "People are keeping pace with modernization," Rinpoche says, "however, the religion remains the same as it was in early 20<sup>th</sup> century." Lamaism in Mongolia should renew itself to meet the religious needs of the population, as Buddhism has done in other countries, such as Thailand, Korea, Japan and China. Current Mongolian religious leaders are thriving in religious education, but are weak in such areas as renovation and administering the monks.<sup>167</sup>

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<sup>164</sup> Munkh-Ochir Dorjjugder (Lead researcher, the Institute for Strategic Studies) in discussion with the author, January 2007, The Institute for Strategic Studies, Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia.

<sup>165</sup> Rupin, 12.

<sup>166</sup> Ravdan Bold, (Ambassador of Mongolia to the United States) in discussion with the author, March 12, 2007, Embassy of Mongolia in the United States. Mr. Ravdan Bold was secretary of the National Security Council of Mongolia from 1997 to 2002. He is a prominent scholar in the security affairs and a founding scholar of the Institute for Strategic Studies.

<sup>167</sup> Ajaa Rinpoche (Rinpoche) in discussion with the author, February 27, 2007, Rinpoche's residence in Mill Valley, California.

Professor Shurkhuu finds the revival of Buddhism in Mongolia since the early 1990's healthy. Lamaism in Mongolia is still strong in the spiritual and habitual spheres; however, it is weak in terms of keeping the modern pace. This is quite acceptable compared to the early 20th century's fanatic superstition of a medieval form.<sup>168</sup>

### **3. How do Political Interest Groups Differ?**

In order to examine the potential for a catalytic event that would change the political and religious landscape in Ulaanbaatar, the author conducted a number of interviews with leading political leaders, government officials and scholars about a hypothetical reincarnation of 15<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama in Mongolia. These interviews revealed that the policy-makers' opinions are already divided into two camps with regard to such an event. Supporters refer to democratic principles of government responsiveness and welcome the reincarnation of the Dalai Lama for reasons pertaining to national identity. Opponents cite the conditionality of the Chinese factor and concerns over national security, similar to anti-independence parties arguments in Taiwan. Moreover, CCP has already begun to cooperate with major Mongolian political parties, such as the Mongolian People's Revolutionary Party, the Mongolian Democratic Party and the Civil Will Party, as it already does with the KMT and the PFP in Taiwan.<sup>169</sup>

#### ***a. Supporters***

The supporters applaud the Dalai Lama's possible reincarnation in Mongolia, but have different reasons.

The principles of a democratic government, such as respect for the fundamental rights and freedoms of its citizens and responsiveness to the people's political demands, play an important role in religious affairs. Bat-Uuel, a member of Parliament and an active leader of the Democratic Party of Mongolia, strongly believes

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<sup>168</sup> Professor D. Shurkhuu (Scientific Secretary, Institute of International Studies, Academy of Science) in a discussion with author, February 1, 2007, Headquarter of Academy of Science, Mongolia.

<sup>169</sup> Migeedorj Batchimeg, "Future Challenges for the PRC and Mongolia: A Mongolian Perspective" *China Brief* vol.5, issue 10, May 5, 2005  
[http://www.jamestown.org/publications\\_details.php?volume\\_id=408&issue\\_id=3322&article\\_id=2369704](http://www.jamestown.org/publications_details.php?volume_id=408&issue_id=3322&article_id=2369704)  
(accessed June 5, 2007).

this. Above all, Mongolia is an independent country. Regardless of how other countries – even a powerful one like China -- feel about it, the government of Mongolia should be Mongolian. Secondly, the government of Mongolia should respect human rights. The reincarnation is a religious matter and politics have nothing to do with it. The right to believe and practice religion is a human rights issue as well. Thirdly, as a democracy, the Mongolian government should be responsive to the people's choice. If people appreciate Lamaism as a part of their national identity and support the Dalai Lama or any other reincarnated monks, the government should protect the Dalai Lama regardless of China's threat.<sup>170</sup>

The Dalai Lama issue provides the country with some unique opportunities in security and foreign policy. Mrs. Hulan Hashbat, a former member of parliament, maintains that the reincarnation of the Dalai Lama would have at least two positive impacts on Mongolia. The domestic impact of this would be the elimination of the old outdated nomadic image of Mongolia and the reemphasis of the Buddhist character of Mongolian civilization. Mongolia could potentially become a center of Mahayana Buddhism, which would attract tourists and be profitable for its economy. This would actively promote "security of Mongolian civilization," one sector of the comprehensive security concept of Mongolia. She emphasizes the importance of securing Mongolian civilization in the emerging Sino-centric East Asian regionalism. The international impact would be the increased importance of Mongolia in other great powers' politics with China. Russia-China and U.S. – China relationships will be competitive in the future because these countries see each other as strategic competitors. In this regard, the Dalai Lama would help Mongolia to attract the attention of other great powers.<sup>171</sup>

#### ***b. Opponents***

The main argument of the opposition is related to national security. Recognition of the 15<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama, Professor Batbayar Tsedendamba concludes, would drive Mongolia onto a collision course with China's security policy. This would

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<sup>170</sup> Bat-Uuel in discussion.

<sup>171</sup> Hashbat Hulan (Former member of Parliament) in discussion with the author, 13 February, 2007 Monterey, CA.

disregard the fundamental foreign policy principles of good neighbor relationships with Russia and China.<sup>172</sup> The concept of foreign policy gives the foremost priority to the Mongolian relationship with its immediate neighbors for “all-round good neighborly cooperation.”<sup>173</sup>

Bayarkhuu Dashdorj says that Mongolia should learn from its historical experience . A religious war in Tibet and the 5<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama’s policy of leading the Mongolian military into Tibetan domestic policy in the 17<sup>th</sup> century led to political instability, which resulted in Mongolia joining the Qing Dynasty. History repeats itself, he states, describing the similarity of today’s situation. The Dalai Lama runs out of options; he surrenders the Tibetan Independence policy and looks for normalizing his relationship with China. China warns Mongolia very politely; closing the railroad in 2002, and suspending a high ranking visit in 2006. In this circumstance, Mongolia gains nothing but failure if it supports the Dalai Lama.<sup>174</sup>

As a small country, Mongolia should be cautious of its relations with great powers, Professor Shurkhoo of the Scientific Secretary of the Institute of International Studies asserts. He warns that India could be interested in the reincarnation of the Dalai Lama in Mongolia. The Dalai Lama issue is one of the current problems in Indo-Chinese relations. Dehli seeks a good relationship with China and wants to have its share of development of Chinese western regions. The reincarnation of the Dalai Lama in Mongolia would liberate India from a problem with China and provide a good opportunity to keep its leverage against China in Mongolia.. India intends to play Mongolia against China, just as China does Pakistan against India.<sup>175</sup>

China, as Professor Shurkhoo surmises, might also be interested the Dalai Lama’s reincarnation in Mongolia. Mongolia would rapidly become dependent on China and would be unable to pose a military threat in any way. A dependent Mongolia would

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<sup>172</sup> Batbayar Tsedendamba (Professor, National University of Mongolia) discussion with the author, January 31, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia.

<sup>173</sup> Mongolia Society, “Foreign Policy Concept of Mongolia,” Indiana University <http://www.indiana.edu/~mongsoc/mong/foreign.htm>, (accessed March 6, 2007)

<sup>174</sup> Bayarkhuu in discussion.

<sup>175</sup> Shurkhoo in discussion.

provide more opportunity to control the Dalai Lama in the case of his reincarnation in the country than anywhere else, especially in India.<sup>176</sup>

## **B. EXTERNAL FACTORS**

Many external factors would affect Mongolia's policy as a small power. In the event of the reincarnation of the Dalai Lama, a variation in these factors would directly shape Ulaanbaatar's strategy.

The first section will explain why the reincarnation is a potential, indeed realistic, problem in light of the Panchen Lama's case (which suggests two reincarnations of the Dalai Lama). The Dalai Lama and his officials debate a strategy to avoid this possible controversy, in which the reincarnation in Mongolia is not ruled out. The next section evaluates the military parameters of Mongolian self-defense and the limits of Chinese capabilities for direct invasion. The third section assesses Mongolia's dependence on the growing Chinese economy. The final section discusses the international environment that could affect Chinese influence.

### **1. Reincarnation and Politics**

The *South China Morning Post*, a Hong Kong newspaper, reported that Tao Changsong, who is the deputy director of Tibetan Contemporary Research Center in Lhasa, proclaimed that the next Dalai Lama will not be found among "foreigners." In response, the Dalai Lama announced that he will be reborn in a "free" country out of China's control.<sup>177</sup> This fact illustrates the very possibility of having two Dalai Lamas after the current one passes away, "one approved by Chinese and one endorsed by the Tibetans."<sup>178</sup> This is the same controversy as the Panchen Lama reincarnation.

A "free" country out of China's control could be anywhere, but the reincarnation would have different impacts on international policy. A reincarnation would challenge

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<sup>176</sup>Shurkhuu in discussion.

<sup>177</sup> "Dalai's reincarnation will not be found under Chinese control," *The Government of Tibet in Exile*, July 6, 1999, <http://www.tibet.com/DL/next-reincarnation.html> (accessed July 17, 2006).

<sup>178</sup> Philip J. Barton, *Tibet and China: History, Insurgency, and Beyond*. (Master's thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, June 2003), 104.



the host country's policy toward China. The Tibetan government-in-exile would continue to contest China's sovereignty in Tibet, using religion as an instrument.

Mongolia is not excluded from the possible host countries. A Mongolian Dalai Lama would likely enjoy popular support not only from Tibet and (Outer) Mongolia, but also from Inner Mongolia. This reincarnation would definitely challenge China's policy with Mongolia, which would have a direct impact on China's international reputation.

*a. Panchen Lama Case*

The most important issue today is the disputed Panchen Lama's reincarnation, which resulted in two Panchen Lamas. China announced a six-year-old boy as the next figure of the Panchen Lama in 1996, whose previous figure had deceased in 1989. This contradicted the Dalai Lama's announcement of another boy as the Panchen Lama. The Panchen Lama recognized by the Dalai Lama soon disappeared. The lama, who found this Panchen Lama and brought to the Dalai Lama, is not found either.

The dispute between the Dalai Lama and China's government stems from different interpretations of the recognition process. As a divine science, recognition of reincarnation always fell under the Dalai Lama's or big lamas' authority, because they can read the signs of rebirth. If the readings of these signs show that one is the next figure of a deceased lama without any doubt, the fact was called "reincarnation in mind." The recognition process, however, has not always gone smoothly throughout history. The Manchu Emperor, a patron of Lamaism, took a leading role in drawing lots from a golden urn to make the final decision if several candidates were found for the reincarnation.<sup>179</sup>

Based on this historical legacy, the two parties hold differing views. The Dalai Lama's justification was that only he has the power of recognition of the Panchen Lama's

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<sup>179</sup> Tempa Tsering, "Customs Pertaining to the recognition of the Dalai Lams and the Panchen Lamas Of Tibet," The Government of Tibet in Exile, <http://www.tibet.com/PL/nov29c.html> (accessed June 5, 2007).

reincarnation.<sup>180</sup> China, on the other hand, blames the Dalai Lama for not drawing lots from a golden urn. For China, the central government always participated in drawing lots.<sup>181</sup>

This case is significant because it reveals the intentions of both sides-- the Dalai Lama's interest in keeping the religious string of Tibetan life in his hands and China's attempt to keep the Dalai Lama out of any issues in Tibet, including those pertaining to religion. Moreover, the same situation could repeat itself with the recognition of the next Dalai Lama.

***b. Dalai Lama and Tibetan Government-in-Exile***

Two constitutional provisions have constituted the main goals of the Tibetan government-in-exile's policy since 1961, when the draft of the constitution was presented to and rejected by the People's Deputies (the Tibetan legislative body-in-exile). These are the separation of church and state and the transition from a monarchic rule to a republic. These provisions, restated in 1992, not only introduce democracy and change to the traditional governance of Tibet, but also have significant strategic implications for the future of Tibet and the Dalai Lama, as well as his following reincarnations' role in Tibetan society.

These would be steps towards democratization of the Tibetan government following the "principles of modern democracy."<sup>182</sup> The Dalai Lama would be the leader of all Buddhists, like the Pope for Roman Catholics, and give up his throne to the secular and republican government-in-exile. He defines himself as "a monk involved in national struggle," but spends 80 percent of his energy in the spiritual field.<sup>183</sup> Tashi Wangdi

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<sup>180</sup> Tempa Tsering, "Customs Pertaining to the recognition of the Dalai Lams and the Panchen Lamas Of Tibet," The Government of Tibet in Exile, <http://www.tibet.com/PL/nov29c.html> (accessed June 5, 2007).

<sup>181</sup> Zhan Weihua, "The Reincarnation of Living Buddhas of Tibetan Buddhism and Administration of Living Buddhas Exercised by Central Government," China Tibetology, <http://www.tibet.cn/english/zt/TibetologyMagazine/..%5CTibetologyMagazine/..%5CTibetologyMagazine/2003120053195527.htm> (accessed June 5, 2007)

<sup>182</sup> The Government of Tibet in Exile, "His Holiness Dalai Lama's Vision for Free Tibet," The Government of Tibet in Exile, <http://www.tibet.com/future.html>, (accessed March 29, 2007).

<sup>183</sup> Hana Gartner, interview with the Dalai Lama, *CBC News*, April 19, 2004. <http://www.cbc.ca/news/background/dalailama/interview.html>, (accessed March 29, 2007).

explains that “he might be the last Dalai Lama who ruled the religion and government in one hand.”<sup>184</sup> Indeed, the Dalai Lama has several times stated the possibility of granting the title of the Dalai Lama in the same way of choosing a Pope, and not in a traditional way of reincarnation.<sup>185</sup>

However, the parliament-in-exile blocked the constitutional amendments to make such changes. “Tibetan people are not ready to accept such radical change,” Tashi Wangdi explains, “even though the Dalai Lama does it for [the] benefit of all Tibetans.”<sup>186</sup>

These amendments to the constitution would not only be significant to democratization of the government-in-exile, but also to the strategy for dealing with China after the current Dalai Lama passes away. The separation of church and state would likely facilitate the Tibetan government-in-exile’s peaceful reconciliation of the Tibet issue with China. China will never accept a theocratic style of governance in its autonomous regions. If the government-in-exile is secular, Tibet and China could reach an agreement in a somewhat similar way to the unification of Hong Kong and Macao. A republican form of governance would also enable the government-in-exile to avoid recognition of the Tibetan King in the case of a possible dispute between two reincarnated Dalai Lamas, such as Panchen Lama’s reincarnation case.<sup>187</sup>

Tibetan activists do not rule out the possibility of the reincarnation of the Dalai Lama in Mongolia. “According to [the] theory of reincarnation, [the] soul seeks for a place that it can feel comfortable in terms of religion and culture,” Bhuchung Tsering explains. “Next to Tibet, Mongolia may be a place where the Dalai Lama can find himself at home. [The] Importance of reincarnation of the Dalai Lama in Mongolia,” he continues, “is it would prove him to be a global Buddhist leader, and not just of

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<sup>184</sup> Tashi Wangdi (Representative of His Holiness Dalai Lama, The Office of Tibet) in discussion with the author, March 16, 2007, New York City, NY.

<sup>185</sup> Indian Express, 1999.

<sup>186</sup> Tashi Wangdi in discussion.

<sup>187</sup> Tashi Wangdi said in discussion that China will definitely recognize their Dalai Lama; he is in fact “100 percent sure” of it.

Tibetans."<sup>188</sup> He is sure that if the current Dalai Lama's religious role in Mongolia is emphasized enough by Mongolians, it could help Mongolia avoid possible Chinese pressure in the case of his reincarnation in the country.

Unlike Bhuchung Tsering, Tashi Wangdi highlights the purpose of reincarnation -- continuing the cause one started, but left incomplete in the previous life. Mongolia is economically weak and dependent on China -- conditions that are not conducive to the continuation of the Dalai Lama's cause. However, Mongolia has numerous historical and religious advantages. One of the previous incarnations was a Mongolian; Mongolians belongs to the same Mahayana sect; and the Dalai Lama enjoys popular respect in the country. Tashi Wangdi explains that the Dalai Lama can reincarnate anywhere in the Buddhist countries -- Myanmar, Thailand, Vietnam, or Mahayana Mongolia.<sup>189</sup>

The Tibetan strategy of secularism and republicanism would enable the Tibetan government-in-exile to peacefully reconcile the Tibet issue with China and avoid the potential problem of recognizing two Dalai Lamas in the future. Tibetan officials probably debate the positives and negatives of such a reincarnation.

## **2. How Will China's Military Threat Affect Mongolian Policy?**

China is the most important external factor, especially in terms of military power. Military leaders debate the Mongolian Armed Forces' (MAF) capability of defending the country from major powers like Russia and China. Although protection of the nation by purely military means is very dubious, some military leaders argue that they are indeed capable.. China's military threat is limited by Beijing's relationship with other great powers and its international prestige among other nations, which may be more valuable than an invasion of Mongolia.

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<sup>188</sup> Bhuchung Tsering, Vice President, International Campaign for Tibet, in discussion with the author, March 13, 2007, Washington D.C.

<sup>189</sup> Tashi Wangdi in discussion.

*a. Mongolia's Self-Defense Capability*

Military leaders have different opinions about Mongolia's self-defense capability; however, they agree that the use of military for the purpose of supporting the Mongolian foreign policy effort to elevate the country's international prestige is the best way of ensuring national security with military means. Since the end of the Cold War and the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Mongolia, the Mongolian Armed Forces (MAF) have had to justify their existence and find their place in a democratic society. Article 11 of the constitution of Mongolia states that "Mongolia maintains armed forces for self-defense."<sup>190</sup>

Whether Mongolia is able to defend itself from a foreign aggressor is one of the main debates. Brigade General Sosorbaram Chimiddorj believes that no country's first choice would be by military means if the Mongolian Armed Forces are strong and enough to sustain an attack. He calls this "Doorstep Theory," explaining that the doorstep should be high enough for foreign invaders.<sup>191</sup> Major General Mygmar Dovchin believes that Mongolia could mobilize at least 100,000 troops in the case of a mass invasion, which would be strong enough to require an invader to have at least 500,000 troops. This scale of military conflict would not remain local, gradually escalating to a regional problem and attracting the regional and global powers' interests and interventions. No great power can easily invade any small country if the small power successfully organizes the defense and mobilizes its resources, as in Chechnya and Afghanistan.<sup>192</sup>

Others view Mongolia as incapable of defending itself from its neighbors. In Lieutenant General Molomjamts Luvsangombo Namnan's opinion, it is impossible for an army of 10,000 to defend 1.5 million square kilometers of territory against 2 million Chinese troops. Mongolia would have been able to defend itself if it were in Europe, where neighbors are small. However, Russia and China are both undoubtedly military

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<sup>190</sup> International Constitutional Library, "Constitution of Mongolia," International Constitutional Library <http://www.oefre.unibe.ch/law/icl/mg00000.html>. (accessed June 5, 2007)

<sup>191</sup> Brigade General Sosorbaram Chimiddorj (Director, Strategic Management and Planning, Ministry of Defense) in discussion with the author, February 1, 2007, Ministry of Defense, Mongolia.

<sup>192</sup> Major General Mygmar Dovchin (Director, The Institute for Strategic Studies) in discussion with the author, January 30, 2007, The Institute for Strategic Studies, Mongolia.

powers with both human and technological advantages over Mongolia. Therefore, the MAF cannot fulfill its genuine function of defending the country, despite its constitutional obligation. The only meaningful function of the troops is peacekeeping missions to raise Mongolia's national prestige in the UN and among friendly nations, thereby using political and diplomatic means of ensuring security.<sup>193</sup> Mrs. Oyun Sanjaasuren Ulaalzai-Hoegduud, a member of parliament, asserts that most politicians share this opinion.<sup>194</sup>

A compromise of both sides of debate points to military reform. Mongolia, on the one hand, still implements conscription and universal military duty; however, the number of those conscripted has significantly decreased and the service term has been shortened. Current defense reform, on other hand, focuses on UN Peacekeeping operations (PKO).

Participating in UN PKO is the first and most important achievement of Mongolian military reform. This is the only rational use of the military to support the political and diplomatic means of ensuring national security.<sup>195</sup> MAF UN PKO deployment can be regarded as an "active self-defense," complementing the constitutional provisions.<sup>196</sup>

#### ***b. Chinese Limits***

Whether Mongolia is able to defend itself or not, China has limits to its military capacity. China's relationship with Russia and Chinese foreign policy principles likely prevent Beijing from taking severe military action against Mongolia.

Mongolia is a buffer state between Russia and China. Both great powers have vested interest in the buffer state's neutral existence to keep a military and geopolitical balance between them. A Chinese military threat to Mongolia, therefore, would definitely affect Russia's security interest. Both countries depict their relationship as a

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<sup>193</sup> Lieutenant General Molomjamts Luvsangombo Namnan (Adviser, The Institute for Strategic Studies) in discussion with the author, January 30, 2007, The Institute for Strategic Studies, Mongolia.

<sup>194</sup> Oyun Sanjaasuren Ulaalzai-Hoegduud (a member of parliament) in discussion with the author, February 2, 2007, Zorig Foundation Headquarter, Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia.

<sup>195</sup> Molomjamts in discussion.

<sup>196</sup> Sosorbaram in discussion.

strategic partnership; however, it is dubious how long that can last.<sup>197</sup> Great power-to-great power relations and geographic proximity are the factors that tend to escalate disputes to military conflict.<sup>198</sup>

It is unlikely that China would go against its best-selling foreign policy principle of “peaceful co-existence.” Unlike Taiwan, Mongolia is an independent nation recognized by the international community, including the People's Republic of China. China is less willing to break its foreign policy principle of peaceful co-existence and respecting the sovereignty of a nation. This is the “core of the Chinese Government’s foreign policy,” used as an argument for the “peaceful rise” of China.<sup>199</sup> Using military power would likely harm its relationships with other countries.

China would have difficulties acquiring legitimacy for its military action against Mongolia, whether it was a partial or full invasion. According to Ikenberry’s theory, this is because of a reduced return of power of the international institutions. It is unlikely that the UN Security Council, where Russia has a seat and right of veto, would allow China to take military action against a legitimate UN member. This is, in fact, the lock-in effect for China, as Ikenberry’s theory states. China, unlike the United States, is an emerging power, not a status quo power, and therefore has less capacity for unilateral action.

Military invasion, therefore, is not China’s first option. Such action would have risk China’s “peaceful rise,” and would affect China’s relationship with other countries. It would also be constrained by international institutions that would increase the cost of military action.

### **3. How Mongolia's Economic Dependence on China Will Affect Its Policy?**

#### ***a. Dependence on China***

Mongolia's economic dependence on China will greatly affect its policy toward China. Unlike Taiwan, Mongolia has not developed a strategy to avoid its

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<sup>197</sup> Hulan in discussion.

<sup>198</sup> Sample 679.

<sup>199</sup> Pan Tao, “Timeless Theme of International Relations,” *Beijing Review* (April 23, 2004).

increasing economic dependence on China. Mongolia is dependent on China and will remain so. The volume of bilateral trade between these two countries takes one-third of Mongolian foreign trade, as the Institute of International Studies estimates. This trend is growing. In 2005-2006, bilateral trade rose from 30% to 40%.<sup>200</sup>

Increasing economic dependence on China makes Mongolia more vulnerable to economic sanctions. The Mongolian economy was greatly devastated when China closed its railway system in 2002, during the Dalai Lama's visit in Mongolia. Shurkhuue describes that the supply of goods suddenly stopped, demand increased, and prices rose dramatically during this period, as.<sup>201</sup> About 700 small merchants were blocked on both sides of the border, Mr. Bold Ravdan recalls that trade flow between the countries stopped. The goods supply to the central market of Ulaanbaatar was cut due to the railroad closure and food supply shortages were observed on a small scale in ten provinces.<sup>202</sup>

This case illustrates how dependent Mongolia is on China and how easily Chinese economic sanctions can devastate this country. Mongolia currently has no means to balance China's growing economic influence. Ulaanbaatar seeks a powerful neighbor to balance its dependence on the Chinese economy so that the 2002 railroad system closure is not repeated. Unfortunately, the surrounding economies of Mongolia do not care about poor, small and ineffective economic reform.

Russian economic downfall no longer promises a reliable and effective balance against China, even though Russian businessmen still control a large share of Mongolian heavy industry. *Erdenet*, a copper and molybdenum refining factory that provides a huge part of the national budget, has a Russian share of 49%.<sup>203</sup> Mongolian Railways, which is the only company that runs Mongolia's only railroad connected Russia and China, is also partially owned by a Russian company. In addition, Russians

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<sup>200</sup> Shurkhuu in discussion.

<sup>201</sup> Shurkhuu, in discussion.

<sup>202</sup> Bold, in discussion.

<sup>203</sup> International Task Force Commodity Risk Management, "Mongolia Copper Risk Management," International Task Force Commodity Risk Management, August, 2001. <http://www.itf-commrisk.org/documents/mongoliacopper2.pdf>. (accessed June 6, 2007)



control almost all of the oil imports. However, these economic influences are less effective in balancing the growing Chinese economic influence.

U.S., Korean and Japanese economic participation is insignificant compared to that of China. In 2004, imports from Korea accounted for only 6.7%, and Japanese imports accounted for 8.4%. The United States is not even mentioned as a main trade partner.<sup>204</sup> Although these countries are the main donors of Mongolian democracy and market transition, their trade and investment share is insufficient to balance China's economic influence over Mongolia.

Although bilateral economic dependence between individual countries is dramatically increasing, there is no official regional economic cooperation in Central Asia or Northeast Asia in which Mongolia could participate. ASEAN is the only effective and successful regional economic cooperation, and Ulaanbaatar made great efforts to join it.<sup>205</sup> Mongolia became a member of the ASEAN Regional Forum in 1998, and it joined the Asia Cooperation Dialogue in 2004.<sup>206</sup> However, full membership in APEC, PECC and other regional organizations are far in the horizon. The fact that Mongolia is not a Southeast Asian country and that Mongol-ASEAN trade is insignificantly low make the country unimportant to ASEAN.

Under these circumstances, Chinese economic sanctions on Mongolia would have a devastating effect, but only in the short run. Sustaining these sanctions requires consent of other countries, and in particular, Russia's commitment. The Soviet Union encouraged Mongolian nationalists to strengthen their influence under China's threat to Mongolian independence. In the same way, Russia and others may expel the Chinese from the Mongolian economy. In the long-term, this will shift the balance of power between Russia and China in Mongolia's favor of Russia.

Even if Russia went along with Chinese economic sanctions, neither country would follow through on the long-term, at least for two reasons. First, such

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<sup>204</sup> See "Country data" in Kerry Dumbaugh and Wayne M. Morrison, "Mongolia: Political and Economic Status," *CRS Report for Congress*, (May 3, 2006) 1.

<sup>205</sup> Christopher A. McNally and Charles Morrison eds. *Asia Pacific Security Outlook 200*, (Tokyo, New York: Japan Center for International Exchange, 2001), 116.

<sup>206</sup> *Diplomatic Bluebook of Mongolia 2006* (Ministry of Foreign Affairs: Ulaanbaatar, 2006), 196 - 198.

sanctions would ruin Mongolia economically and politically, the results of which would be unpredictable. Secondly, the sanctions would create an economic power vacuum in the huge buffer zone between the two major powers. Each power would fear that the other would take an advantage of this vacuum.

#### **4. International Environment**

The international environment and pressures from great powers have a significant affect on a small power's foreign and security policy. As a small power, Mongolia is vulnerable to its great neighbors' policies. Mongolia's current "third neighbor policy" clearly reflects an external balancing strategy to balance its powerful two neighbors with other global and regional powers. In this policy, the United States is considered as a strategic "third neighbor," and India as a "cultural" Neighbor.<sup>207</sup> The following section will examine the regional powers' interests and current policies with Tibetan and Mongolian affairs, which will be the basis of their policies in the case of the Dalai Lama's reincarnation in Mongolia.

##### **a. China**

(1) China's Tibet Policy. China firmly considers Tibet its integral territory. This is the fundamental principle of its policy with Tibet. Any other policy with Tibet would be viewed as an external interruption in China's domestic policy. The Dalai Lama's actions to free Tibet, therefore, are seen as "splittist," and India's asylum for him is seen as an external interference in China's internal affairs.

"Marxism, with its search for historical 'laws,'" John Garver writes, "coincides with and reinforced China's hoary concern with the past."<sup>208</sup> The occupation of Indian-claimed Himalayan territories was driven by nationalism. The myth of national humiliation, which is the basis of this Chinese ideology, justified the

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<sup>207</sup> *Asia Pacific Security Outlook 2003*, Charles Morrison ed., 7<sup>th</sup> edition (Tokyo, New York: Japan Center for International Exchange, 2003), 108.

<sup>208</sup> John Garver, *Foreign Relations of the People's Republic of China*, (Englewood Cliff; Prentice Hall, 1993), 3.

occupation of Tibet as an act of cleaning the historical semi-colonial shame posed by the British Empire in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>209</sup>

The nationalist nature of China's foreign policy was evident, especially with regard to the issue of Tibet. Mao Zedong recognized that “the major problem is not the problem of the McMahon line, but the Tibet question.” He maintained, “In the opinion of the Indian government, Tibet is theirs.”<sup>210</sup> As a successor to the British Empire, India was perceived as an imperialist power that claimed China’s lawful territory.

China’s policy has retained this nationalist sentiment. China condemns the Dalai Lama as a traitor who wants to divide China.

The reincarnation of the Dalai Lama in Mongolia would likely enjoy great support not only from Tibetans, but also from the Mongolian Diasporas in China. Mongolian nationalism, its support of the Dalai Lama, and its economic cooperation with Taiwan are China’s foremost security concerns with regard to Mongol-U.S. military cooperation.<sup>211</sup> Although 4 million Mongolian Diasporas makes up only 17% of the total Inner Mongolian population, it could have a potential negative impact on Mongol-Chinese relations.<sup>212</sup>

(2) China’s Policy Options. The Dalai Lama and the Tibetan government-in-exile constitute a threat to China’s territorial integrity that affects the Tibetan Autonomous Region. The reincarnation of the Dalai Lama in Mongolia could double the threat, affecting Inner Mongolia as well. Dealing with this issue would likely require a similar strategy as China’s Taiwan policy.

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<sup>209</sup> John W. Garver, *Protacted Contest: Sino-Indian Rivalry in the Twentieth Century*, (Seattle, London; University of Washington Press, 2003), 33.

<sup>210</sup> *Ibid.*, 59.

<sup>211</sup> Mignedorj Batchimeg, “Future Challenges for the PRC and Mongolia: A Mongolian Perspective” *China Brief* vol.5, issue 10, (May 5, 2005) [http://www.jamestown.org/publications\\_details.php?volume\\_id=408&issue\\_id=3322&article\\_id=2369704](http://www.jamestown.org/publications_details.php?volume_id=408&issue_id=3322&article_id=2369704) (accessed June 5, 2007)

<sup>212</sup> Wan Wei-fang, “Pan-Mongolism and U.S.-China -Mongolia Relations,” *China Brief*, vol. 5, no 10 (May 5, 2005) [http://www.jamestown.org/publications\\_details.php?volume\\_id=408&issue\\_id=3322&article\\_id=2369707](http://www.jamestown.org/publications_details.php?volume_id=408&issue_id=3322&article_id=2369707), (accessed June 5, 2007).

Military invasion is not the first choice. Any military action would affect Sino-Russian relations and could escalate into a military conflict, as the invasion of Tibet did to Indo-Chinese relations. Such action would also devastate its claim for “peaceful rise” and lead to tensions throughout the region. Imposing economic sanctions on Mongolia would be a more effective than military action. However, this would require Russian commitment to sustain the sanctions in the long run.

The most likely option for China would be similar to Beijing’s current policy with Taiwan. This would be CCP collaboration with the anti-Dalai Lama bloc of Mongolian politics to minimize the Dalai Lama’s influence in the country and try to control him through those parties. In this regard, according to Professor Shurkuu, China may be interested in the 15th Dalai Lama’s reincarnation in Mongolia.<sup>213</sup> Beijing would have greater oversight over the Dalai Lama in Mongolia than in India. Beijing has more means of influence over Mongolia than India.

Meanwhile, China would encourage economic relations with Mongolia, which would certainly make Ulaanbaatar more dependent on Beijing. Even today, Mongolia has a vested interest in Chinese stability and prosperity, simply because of its growing dependence on China. Any instability in China would have a direct and harmful impact on Mongolia, just as those of the Soviet Union had before. This dependence would assure Beijing that Ulaanbaatar would never pose a threat.

***b. Russia***

(1) Russian Policy. Russia depicts its relationship with China as a strategic partnership, and Moscow supports Beijing’s policy with the Dalai Lama in order to preserve this partnership. This policy is important for Russia to sustain economic and political support from China; however, how this partnership can endure is an interesting question.

Russia attempts to find a delicate balance between maintaining a good relationship with China and meeting its Buddhist minorities’ needs. Three Buddhist regions of Russia -- Kalmykia, Tuva and Buriyats -- are home to Mongol tribes that share

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<sup>213</sup> Shurkhuu, in discussion

ethnic and religious backgrounds with Mongolians. The Dalai Lama visited Russia in 1992 and had a one-day transit visa in 1995, on his way to Mongolia.<sup>214</sup> The Dalai Lama finally visited Russia in 2004, following three denials of visa over more than a decade. In response to the Chinese government's criticism, the Russian government explained that the issuance of a visa was purely for the religious needs of its minorities.<sup>215</sup>

Russia's interest in collaborating with China is focused on three areas of strategic interest -- arms sales, Central Asia, and economic relations. Arms sales sustain Russia's military industrial complex and retain its status as a world class military power despite the economic difficulties it currently experiences. Cooperation in Central Asia helps to keep Muslim terrorists far from the border, while securing the region's rich energy resources from U.S. global hegemonic reach.<sup>216</sup>

Despite these near-term advantages, Russia faces challenges. Russians debate whether its military and technological cooperation with China is threatened.<sup>217</sup> Sherman Garnett describes three possible circumstances that could end the Sino-Russian strategic partnership -- uncontrolled Islamic resurgence in Central Asia, increased Chinese population in the Russian Far East, and a shift of balance of power between the two states.<sup>218</sup> Chinese military action, such as an invasion of Mongolia, therefore, would surely change the balance of power and would end the Sino-Russian cooperation. Russia is concerned about Mongolia "drifting away from Russia toward

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<sup>214</sup> Susan Glassier, "Russia Blocks Visit by the Dalai Lama," *Washington Post* (August 16, 2002), <http://www.washingtonpost.com/ac2/wp-dyn/A26521-2002Aug16?language=printer&reload=true>, (accessed March 28, 2007.)

<sup>215</sup> "Dalai Lama Arrives in Southern Russian Buddhist's Region," *Voice of America*, (November 30, 2004), <http://www.voanews.com/english/archive/2004-11/2004-11-30-voa5.cfm?CFID=129161119&CFTOKEN=82432758> (accessed June 5, 2007).

<sup>216</sup> Ariel M. Cohen, "Russia and the Axis of Evil: Money, Ambition, and U.S. Interest," The Heritage Foundation, November 26, 2003, <http://www.heritage.org/Research/RussiaandEurasia/test022603.cfm>, (accessed March 28, 2007).

<sup>217</sup> Paradorn Rangsimaporn, "Russia's Debate on Military-Technological Cooperation with China," *Asian Survey*, vol.46, no 3, 477-495.

<sup>218</sup> Sherman Garnett, "Challenges of the Sino-Russian Strategic Partnership," *The Washington Quarterly*, (Autumn 2001), 41-54.

China”<sup>219</sup> in political and economic terms, but hopes that deep cultural ties established during the Soviet era can sustain the relationship on a certain level.

With regard to the Dalai Lama, Russia faces the dilemma of keeping its strategic partnership with China and responding to its people’s religious needs, as well as Mongolia’s. Its partnership with China is valuable and helps Russia to overcome the difficulties it faces today; however, it may become brittle as China grows and modernizes at Russia’s expense.

(2) Russia’s Policy Options. Russia would not support Mongolia in the Dalai Lama issue; however, it would defend Mongolia against China in the case of Chinese invasion.

Mongolia’s relationship with Russia is fading and Mongolia is becoming increasingly dependent on China rather than Russia. For Russia, China is more important than Mongolia; therefore, the current Russian policy of supporting China against the Dalai Lama would be unlikely to change. Thus Russian policy would remain the same.

Russia, however, would not tolerate any hostile action taken by China against Mongolia that would change the balance of power between Russia and China. It also seeks an opportunity to strengthen its political and economic influence again. Both the Past Action and Current Calculus theories guarantee Russian military assistance to Mongolia in the case of a Chinese military threat. The Soviet Union defended Mongolia against Japanese invasion in Khalkiin Gol in 1939. Soviet military installations were based in Mongolia during its coldest period with China. Furthermore, Chinese illegal immigration in the Russian Far East is one of the main problems of the Russo-Chinese relationship. A Chinese invasion or military threat to Mongolia would definitely shift the balance of power in favor of China, and the bilateral strategic partnership will be finished, as was the case of Sino-Indian relation in 1950’s, which ended with a war.

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<sup>219</sup> Sergei Blagov, “Mongolia Drifts away from Russia toward China” *China Brief*, Vol. 5, Issue 10. (May 5, 2005), [http://www.jamestown.org/publications\\_details.php?volume\\_id=408&issue\\_id=3322&article\\_id=2369706](http://www.jamestown.org/publications_details.php?volume_id=408&issue_id=3322&article_id=2369706) (accessed June 5, 2007).

*c. India*

(1) Policy with the Dalai Lama. India would likely support the reincarnation of the 15<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama in Mongolia. Delhi is interested in developing a close and friendly relationship with China. Chinese plans of developing western regions promise Indian business a great joint future. Reincarnation of the Dalai Lama would provide two opportunities -- liberating it from a face-to-face problem with China, and backing Mongolia in the Dalai Lama issue against China, as Chinese does for Pakistan on the nuclear issue.

The Tibet issue is the root of all three current problems between China and India. The border disputes, the Dalai Lama issue, and China's support of Pakistan all derive from China's peaceful liberation of Tibet. India considers Tibet its sphere of influence inherited from the British Empire and a buffer against China. China's occupation of Tibet in 1951, however, "vanished (it) overnight."<sup>220</sup> The balance of power between regional powers shifted, and India felt threatened by China. As long as the issue of Tibet exists, the two emerging powers cannot resolve their conflicts. The issue of Tibet is therefore an important strategic variable in Sino-Indian relations.

In contrast, India had a friendly policy towards China in the early 1950's. Indian Prime Minister Nehru's strategy with China in the early 1950's was to support Beijing among newly independent post-colonial countries, because the isolation of China would cause it to depend more on the USSR and increase its belligerent behavior toward other Asian countries.<sup>221</sup> India actively supported China in order to establish a good relationship with post-colonial countries at the Bandung Conference in 1955. India's government recognized China's sovereignty over Tibet in 1954. However, the two countries have continuously attempted to challenge one another since Sino-Indian War . India used Soviet support against China, which in fact led the United States to support China.

The three main issues in Sino-Indian relations are "unresolved boundary (and territorial) issues, Tibet, and the Pakistan factor," as Du Youkang

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<sup>220</sup> Sidhu and Yuan, 12.

<sup>221</sup> Sidhu and Yuan, 118.

describes.<sup>222</sup> The territorial disputes derive from the Simla Treaty. China does not accept the border demarcation between British India and Tibet that is drawn by this treaty, which the Nationalist government of the day had never signed. India requires China to observe the only documented border line between the two countries, which is the Simla Treaty.

To counter-balance India's policy of building a buffer along the Sino-Indian border and its policy with the Himalayan Kingdoms, China has backed Pakistan against India. New Delhi suspects that China is providing nuclear technology to Pakistan. This was the main justification of India's nuclear test in 1998.<sup>223</sup>

India provides asylum to the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan government-in-exile. The Dalai Lama, who is the legitimate king of Tibet, resides in Dharmasala, a city in Northern India. He exposes China's cultural genocide in Tibet and promotes a "free Tibet." China sees the Dalai Lama's action as an attempt at "splitting the nation."<sup>224</sup>

(2) Indian Policy Options. India has no reason not to support the Dalai Lama's reincarnation in Mongolia.

Delhi might have some advantages in this scenario, according to Professor Shurkhuu. The reincarnation of the next Dalai Lama in Mongolia, on the one hand, would eliminate one of its problems with China. India is interested in the Chinese western region's development and desires to invest and have a good share in its profitable projects. Improving its relationship would definitely promote its interest in this capacity.

India, meanwhile, will still have the Dalai Lama card to play against China if necessary. The buffer status of Tibet and the Dalai Lama will likely to remain an important leverage in India's policy with China because complete resolutions

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<sup>222</sup> Yuan Jing-Dong, "India's Rise after Pokhran II: Chinese Analyses and Assessments," *Asian Survey*, vol. 41, no 6, (November-December, 2001), 983.

<sup>223</sup> Ibid., 980.

<sup>224</sup> "Dalai Lama Deceived His Motherland," *Spiegel Online*, (August 16, 2006), <http://service.spiegel.de/cache/international/spiegel/0,1518,431922.html> (accessed June, 2007). Spiegel interviewed Zhan Qingli, the head of the Communist Party in Tibet about the role of the Dalai Lama. Zhan Qingli explained the official policy of the PRC with the Dalai Lama and blamed him for deceiving his motherland.



of Sino-Indian territorial disputes are nowhere on the horizon. Reincarnation of the Dalai Lama would strengthen Indian interest in Mongolia. India is considered the cultural neighbor of Mongolians.<sup>225</sup> India's first ambassador, Bakula Rinpoche, was a Buddhist monk after Mongolia's transition from a communist regime to a democracy. He had close relations with the Dalai Lama.<sup>226</sup> India likely has interest to use Mongol-Tibetan and Indian cultural ties to contend with China.

*d. The United States*

(1) U.S. Tibet Policy. U.S. policy with Tibet was always designed in the context of its China strategy. Washington seems to fail to recognize the strategic importance of the Tibet issue in broader terms as a means of controlling two emerging regional powers, India and China. Moreover, the Dalai Lama issue could potentially affect a vast strategic mass, ranging from the Himalayas to the Mongolian step.

In the early days of the PRC, the U.S. operations ST CITRUS and MUSTANG supported Tibetan rebel movements with the intent to contend with communist China in the Himalayan region.<sup>227</sup> This support was limited due to India's pro-China policy and the physical distance between the United States and Nepal, where the military training bases were located. Furthermore, events with a direct strategic importance, such as the Korean War and the Cuban Missile Crisis, required more U.S. attention.

When the Soviet Union backed India against China in 1962, the United States cooperated with the PRC and gave up its Tibet policy until the very end of the Cold War. From 1972 to 1987, Washington recognized Tibet as a part of China and

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<sup>225</sup> Charles Morrison, ed., *Asia Pacific Security Outlook 2003* 7<sup>th</sup> edition, (Tokyo, New York: Japan Center for International Exchange, 2003), 108.

<sup>226</sup> Phuntsog Wangyal, "Tribute to the Venerable Bakula Renpoche," Foundation of the Preservation of the Mahayana Tradition, <http://www.fpmt.org/teachers/baktribute.asp>, (accessed April 24, 2007).

<sup>227</sup> Barton, "Tibet and China," 41 – 46, and 63 -81. ST CITRUS operation trained Tibetan rebels in Special Force techniques in Camp Hale, Colorado, USA, and dropped them into Tibet from an airplane. MUSTANG operation established rebel a training camp in Mustang Valley, Nepal.

took no action “to provoke Beijing by supporting the Tibetan nationalists' demands.”<sup>228</sup> Preserving good relations with China was more important in the U.S. global strategy of the Cold War.

The end of the Cold War changed the strategic calculation of all countries of the world, especially the United States. Under strong congressional pressure, President Bush became the first president to meet the Dalai Lama.<sup>229</sup> President Clinton “created the position of Special Coordinator for Tibetan issues, tasked with the specific mission of helping to promote talks between the Dalai Lama and Beijing.”<sup>230</sup> President George W. Bush appointed Ms. Paula Dobriansky, Under Secretary of State for Global Affairs, making her “the highest ranking U.S. official to have held this position.”<sup>231</sup> The Tibet issue seemed to be gaining attention.

The United States officially recognized Tibet as a part of the PRC; however, a pro-Tibetan group in the U.S. Congress has had a role in shaping the policy. This group calls for a radical review of the current U.S. Tibet policy. They introduced “Tibet’s Legal Status and China’s Sovereignty Claims Act” in May 1991, calling for the United States to recognize Tibet as a country under illegal occupation of the PRC.<sup>232</sup> This proposal was too radical to become a law. This act rightfully pointed out that Mongol rule over Tibet during the Yuan Dynasty provides no historic justification for Chinese claim. But it failed to realize the modern importance of Mongol-Tibetan cultural ties in U.S. policy with China.

The controversy between Congress and the president in Tibetan affairs was clearly observed in 1995 and 1996. Pro-Tibetan legislators demanded the president delay his visit to China “until there had been a marked improvement in respect

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<sup>228</sup> Xu Guangqiu, “The United States and Tibet Issue,” *Asian Survey*, vol. 37, no.11, (November 1997), 1066 -1067.

<sup>229</sup> *Ibid.*, 1071.

<sup>230</sup> Dumbaugh, 22.

<sup>231</sup> *Ibid.* 24.

<sup>232</sup> U.S. Congress, *Congressional Record*, 102<sup>nd</sup> Cong. 1<sup>st</sup> Session, (May 7,1991), vol.137, no. 68.

for human rights in both China and Tibet.”<sup>233</sup> President Clinton objected to the demand, “asserting that the bill contained many unacceptable provisions that would undercut U.S. leadership abroad.”<sup>234</sup>

U.S. policy with Mongolia has traditionally been determined within the framework of its policy with the Soviet Union and China. Washington has only recognized Mongolia since 1987 and has had no strategic interest in Mongolia. Until Mongolia actively engaged in U.S. led military operations such as Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom, it only provided moral support for Mongolian democracy. Current U.S. assistance is based on short-term interest with regard to the war against terrorism, but Mongolia still has no strategic importance due to its land-locked location.

U.S. policy is similar with Mongolia and Tibet. Both countries are land-locked and impossible to reach from the sea. Both of them can be regarded in U.S. policy with regional powers such as India, China and Russia, albeit insignificantly. Washington fails to see Mongolia and Tibet in the context of their close cultural ties, which have historically always had a major importance in the policies of Chinese Dynasties.

(2) U.S. Policy Option. The Tibet issue is one of the significant variables of Indo-Chinese relations. It is therefore too important for Washington to ignore.

The United States is not affected directly by the Dalai Lama’s reincarnation, as India, China, Russia and Mongolia are. U.S. policy options, therefore, are numerous, ranging from idle abstention to active leadership. All of these policies can be summarized in four possible options: do-nothing, support of China, support of India and strategic ambiguity.

The support-India policy is unacceptable for the United States for several reasons. This policy would have a negative effect on current U.S.-China relations. China’s growing nationalism and reflected policy may impair bilateral relations, leading the two countries to a new Cold War. A strong and effective independence movement in

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<sup>233</sup> Xu Guangqui, 1075.

<sup>234</sup> Ibid.

Tibet may lead to a domino effect, reviving separatist sentiments of Uighurs in Xinjiang and Mongolians in Inner Mongolia. These trends would shake China's domestic stability in today's radical economic and social reform. The consequences of this are difficult to predict. China could collapse as the Soviet Union did, leaving the region unstable. If China survived this shake, it could turn back to dictatorship, rolling back all of today's positive trends. The option of supporting India and the Tibetan independence would not lead to desirable consequences.

Supporting China's policy with Tibet would also be dangerous for the United States. The policy would have at least the following negative impacts: It may strengthen U.S.-China relations for the short-term; however, China would remain the strategic competitor and Washington would gain nothing more than it has now. The U.S. reputation of the superpower that enhances and supports universal human rights would be damaged. Allies would be skeptical of the U.S. commitment to democracy. The United States would be unable to use a Dalai Lama card with China with no reciprocity.

Strategic ambiguity prevents the Sino-India -Tibetan dispute from escalating into regional instability. Expanding the almost bilateral three-actor relations between them into triangular or quasi-quadrangular relations provides more room for every actor, except for China. Doing so, the United States can maintain its role in the conflicting issue between two emerging regional powers.

Increasing the U.S. role in the Dalai Lama and Tibet issue would eventually change the calculation of all of the actors. Only China's adversarial position toward the Dalai Lama would remain the same as it was during the Cold War, as opposed to the other actors' positions that have already softened-- the Dalai Lama gave up the Tibetan independence claim and India has a growing interest in western regions development program of Chinese government. China could revise its policy and take steps to accept a softer policy toward the issue, due to the increasing U.S. factor.

The Tibet issue, therefore, may find its convenient resolution with active U.S. involvement. U.S. strategic ambiguity may lead two regional powers to compete for U.S. support for the issue, reducing tensions. Active U.S. support of Mongolia in the Dalai Lama issue would send a strong message of Washington's

commitment to human rights and democracy without encouraging India and China. This would increase the U.S. role in disputed issues between the emerging two regional powers.

### **C. CONCLUSION**

Mongolia has every reason to support the reincarnation of the Dalai Lama in Mongolia. The national policy would therefore directly depend on the international situation. The China factor plays a significant role as both an external and internal factor.

The domestic political situation involves the China factor and the religious needs of the population. The political leaders are already divided into supporters and opponents, and both sides have strong arguments regarding the issue.

The external environment of Mongolia would not change dramatically; however, the pressure on Mongolia from its immediate neighbors would likely be intense. Luckily, it is unlikely that China could threaten Mongolia with military power because of Russia's interest in Mongolia. Economic sanctions might be a preferred option for Beijing to use; however, this would require Russian commitment in order for them to be effective. China would likely collaborate with anti-Dalai Lama political parties in order to limit the role of the Dalai Lama -- the same policy it currently pursues with regard to Taiwan.

Under these circumstances, Mongolia needs support from the international community. India is likely to support Mongolia to contend with its old rival. The Tibetan government-in-exile policy of separation of power would have promoted the security of Mongolia vis-à-vis China.

U.S. policy of strategic ambiguity could have a positive impact on every actor of reincarnation politics. It would change the calculation of all actors and promote stability in a wide region, from the Mongolian plateau to the Himalayan mountains. This involvement would preserve democracy in Mongolia and Russia, and peace between India and China.

## **V. CONCLUSION**

### **A. PRESENT AND PROSPECTIVE**

A small state's interaction with a great power depends of factors such as the type of domestic political regime, the intensity of the threat from an aggressor, and the availability of alliance. A combination of these factors will determine whether Mongolian politicians will favor voters' religious preferences over China's security interests in the case of the next Dalai Lama's reincarnation. The case of Taiwan's independence claim paints a complicated picture about likely developments in Ulaanbaatar and China's possible reaction.

Mongolia will likely try to maximize its interest in keeping its political regime and national identity. This is determined by voters' religious preferences, but limited by the national security threat from China, in order to enhance the "third neighbor" policy, which aims to balance the U.S., Indian and Russian interests against China's interests. It is unlikely that China would risk its relationship with other great powers, its growing reputation among the international community, and the best-selling foreign policy principles of a "peaceful rise" and "coexistence," with a challenge from a weak, isolated buffer country like Mongolia, whose economy is heavily dependent on China. It would probably choose a peaceful means of eliminating a potential threat, such as cooperating with anti-Dalai Lama groups, just as Beijing does with Taiwan today.

#### **1. Domestic Factors**

As a rational actor, Mongolia will attempt to maximize its interests. The question is whether it will give priority to security or democracy. Domestic conditions in Mongolia are inclined to favor the Dalai Lama and maintain the Mongolian national identity. However, these factors often collide with Chinese security interests and meet resistance from Beijing, which could challenge the national security of Mongolia. The dilemma between responsiveness to voters' preferences and national security, which surfaces every time the Dalai Lama visits, will likely become more crucial in domestic politics.

The Mongolian population sympathizes with the Dalai Lama since the Buddhism is a part of the Mongolian identity. Unlike Taiwan, who faces the dilemma of whether they should identify themselves as Chinese or Taiwanese, Buddhism is deeply rooted in Mongolia's history and culture. Although the country has a Communist atheist legacy, the Buddhist identity is strong and will remain so in the near future. Frequent visits of the Dalai Lama have revealed that the Dalai Lama, the leader of Lamaism, enjoys the popular support of Mongolians, and this will remain the case if he reincarnates in Mongolia. Religion in Mongolia is not yet politicized, but surely will be if it faces a political challenge from China.

The dilemma of democracy and security in Mongolia is reflected in policy making. On the one hand, the China factor plays an important role in Mongolian domestic politics, just as it does in foreign policy. Similarly, Beijing's threat plays a conditional factor in Taiwanese public opinion, specifically, whether Taipei's policy should be pro-independence or pro-unification. China takes advantage of Taiwan's political system and cooperates with pro-unification parties to peacefully achieve its goal of extinguishing Taiwan's claim to independence. Like Taiwan, Mongolian politics are open to many opinions and lobbies, and there are many politicians and officials who are ready to stand against the Dalai Lama, as the 9<sup>th</sup> Jebtsundamba's visit in 1999 illustrates. They are concerned about the China's threat to national security and increasing Mongolian economic dependence on China. Beijing may cooperate with these anti-Dalai Lama political groups to peacefully achieve its security interest in the same way it does in Taiwan. On the other hand, pro-Dalai Lama political groups demand that the government be responsive to the religious needs of its people and respect the fundamental rights and freedom of its citizens, including the right to believe. These groups have different views on the principles of democracy and governance, and security challenges. The current political debate on Taiwan's independence and unification presents a good analogy for the possible polarization of Mongolian politics in case of the Dalai Lama's reincarnation, and this trend is observed even today in the opinions of different political leaders and government officials.. Indeed, the CCP already cooperates with major political parties of Mongolia and this cooperation would likely be strengthened to reduce the Mongol Dalai Lama's influence.

The electorate and democracy are the decisive variables in the Mongolian government. Except for the China factor, Mongolians have every reason to support the Dalai Lama; therefore, the religious preference of the population is likely to outweigh China's threat to its national identity, as shown by the Dalai Lama's visits. The government of Mongolia should probably adjust its policy to it. In the decade-long history of Mongolian democracy, every parliamentary election has changed the ruling parties and punished them for their policy failures. To maintain popular support, the government will likely meet the public's religious interests, and will try to balance Beijing's pressure with other great powers' interests, which is the only way to achieve domestic political goals.

If the domestic political system pushes the government towards a pro-Dalai Lama policy, the international environment will be the primary factor shaping the intensity and character of Mongolian foreign policy as a small power.

## **2. External Factors**

External factors will be decisive in shaping Mongolia's foreign and security policy. As a small, vulnerable power, Ulaanbaatar has no means to influence Beijing's foreign policy, since China enjoys military and economic power. The buffer state nature of Mongolia and its international support are its only hope in countering the China factor.

China's position on the Dalai Lama issue will strongly shape Mongolia's policy, just as it does in Taiwan's policy for independence. Ulaanbaatar has described the Dalai Lama's trips as purely religious affairs every time he visits Mongolia. Beijing, in turn, has sent Mongolia both diplomatic and economic warnings, closing the railroad and suspending high-ranking official's visits. In the case of a reincarnation in Mongolia, Beijing would likely increase its pressure, and Mongolia could find itself under military and economic pressure from China that is similar to what Taiwan experiences. Compared to Taiwan, Mongolia's defense capability debatable and its economy is poor and isolated from Asian economic regionalism, such as ASEAN.

China, however, has its limits. Military threat is not the first option for China because it would affect its relationship with other great powers and its reputation in the international community. Similarly, the Sino-U.S. relationship limits Chinese military



action with Taiwan, regardless of the fact that Beijing firmly considers Taiwan an integral part of its sovereign territory and Washington has recognized Chinese sovereignty over Taiwan. China has shown its commitment to war with the Anti-Secession Law. It has drawn a clear line for its military invasion, despite the fact that its power projection capability may be insufficient to achieve a quick victory over Taiwan. Mongolia has two fundamental advantages that make a similar Chinese threat less likely. First, Chinese military action would affect the balance of power against other regional powers. Because of Mongolia's buffer state nature, Russia's interest stands on the other end of the balance of power. The very existence of a buffer state relies on the competing powers' mutual fear and relative balance of power. The current Russo-Chinese strategic partnership can only be achieved if the balance of power between the countries is maintained,<sup>235</sup> and any hostile military action against Mongolia would end this partnership. The United States also has vested interest in Mongolian independence, because it is the pivot between the Russo-Chinese balance in the region. Changing this balance with military action is not permissible in the eyes of either Russia or the United States. Second, Mongolia is a UN member and an independent nation recognized by the international community, including China. Any military aggression against a sovereign nation would negatively affect China's international reputation of "peaceful rise" and its best-selling foreign policy principle of "peaceful co-existence." The limits that restrain China from invading Taiwan would exist for Mongolia as well.

Chinese unilateral economic sanctions and blockades could be effective in the short run, but not in the long-term. Their effectiveness would depend on geopolitical circumstances. The Chinese unilateral naval blockade of Taiwan could be very effective, but it should consider U.S. support for Taiwan. Similarly, China could never effectively enforce Mongolia even economically without Russian commitment. In the long run, such a policy would reject a growing economic dependence of Mongolia on China that is a positive trend for Beijing. Mongolia would be pushed back toward Russia, making Outer Mongolia Russian again. Even if Russia agreed to economic sanctions, neither Moscow nor Beijing would likely follow through in the long-term, since such sanctions would ruin Mongolia economically and politically, the results of which are unpredictable.

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<sup>235</sup> Garnett, 41-54.

Furthermore, the sanctions would create an economic power vacuum in the huge buffer zone between two major powers, and both sides would fear that other may would step in to take an advantage over it.

International support is a crucial variable that directly affects Mongolia's policy. The availability of alliances enables a small country to manipulate great powers' interests for its own purpose. The United States suggests conditional support to Taiwan, which encourages Taipei to maximize its independence claim.. Because of Mongolia's status as a buffer state, it will always have an available ally. Since the Soviet era, Russia has viewed Mongolia as a buffer state on which Russo-Chinese balance of power stand. Moscow would never tolerate hostile action from China because of its interest in Mongolia to keep its balance of power with China. Historical behavior and current calculus both assure Russian assistance in the worst case. Beyond this balance, Ulaanbaatar seeks a third neighbor's support to maximize its fundamental interest of democracy. India and the United States play the most important roles in sustaining democracy and protecting fundamental human rights and freedom in Mongolia. Washington has a vested interest in the Russo-Chinese balance of power, which is the most important factor for regional security, along with Mongolian democracy and its third neighbor policy. India, which granted asylum to the Dalai Lama, has a specific cultural interest in Mongol-Tibetan cultural ties, and has appointed Bakula Rinpoche, a reincarnated Buddhist monk, as an ambassador of India in Ulaanbaatar. The same interest of these global and regional powers would also provide support in the case of the Dalai Lama's reincarnation in Mongolia.

## **B. POLICY IMPLICATION**

Once the reincarnation of the Dalai Lama complicated the domestic and regional situation of Mongolia, the question is how Ulaanbaatar would handle it. This section describes the potential security situation of Western China and provides a recommendation for the government of Mongolia to avoid possible tensions with China.

## **1. The Strategic Situation of Western China**

There would probably be two Dalai Lamas--one recognized by Tibetans, and another by the Chinese government. The two sides would contest which one is true, as with today's case of the two competing Panchen Lamas. The Dalai Lama's reincarnation in Mongolia would have greater regional security implications and would directly affect China's security. The Mongol Dalai Lama would have influence not only in Tibetan Diasporas, but also with Inner Mongolians, which China's government would unlikely welcome.<sup>236</sup> Beijing could find itself in a triangular concern--Mongolia-Tibet-Taiwan--which would have a dangerous impact on Mongolia.

Mongolia should adjust its policy to avoid tension with China while reinforcing its relationships with other nations that could balance Beijing's threat.

## **2. Mongolia's Strategic Goal**

Mongolia's strategic goal is twofold-- ensuring national security and sustaining democracy in Mongolia. Ensuring national security means avoiding a possible conflict of interests with China, or resolving the conflict with peaceful means. Sustaining democracy in Mongolia includes keeping the government responsive to its people and protecting fundamental human rights and freedom. These two interests are mutually exclusive because the government's responsiveness to the people's religious needs means recognition of a Mongol Dalai Lama, but China would demand recognition of other Dalai Lama.

## **3. Mongolia's Strategic Options**

For Mongolia, maximizing interests means simultaneously achieving both goals-- sustaining democracy domestically, and ensuring national security externally. Sacrificing one for the other would not be the best option. A balancing strategy, therefore, is preferred over bandwagoning or appeasing China.

Bandwagoning or appeasement provides no rational strategy for Mongolia. Such strategies could maximize security interests, but would fail to sustain democracy. Recognizing the Dalai Lama that China has recognized and abandoning the Dalai Lama,

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<sup>236</sup> Wan Wei-fang, 2005

who was born in Mongolia, would definitely be irresponsible, non-democratic behavior against the religious beliefs of its own people. Meanwhile, giving up an important leverage in foreign policy, such as the Dalai Lama, would also be an irrational step.

To maximize its interest, Mongolia should simultaneously keep two balances--one between internal and external factors, and another between China and the other great powers. Balancing China with the other great powers' interests is Ulaanbaatar's best choice. Such a strategy would respond to the people's religious needs and sustain democracy; meanwhile, it might ensure Mongolian security in two ways. First, keeping the Dalai Lama in Mongolia would extend Ulaanbaatar's religious and cultural influences beyond the ethnic ties with Inner Mongolia to Tibet. These strong ties could cause a considerable regional instability within China in the case of a direct Chinese military invasion the country. In this way, the Dalai Lama factor would increase the cost and risk of military invasion for China. Second, the reincarnated Dalai Lama would attract the attention of the international community, which would provide a good chance for Mongolia to pursue its "third neighbor" policy to overcome its landlocked and isolated geopolitical disadvantage. India's asylum for the Tibetan government-in-exile and U.S. support of the current Dalai Lama show that the two nations would likely support Mongolia in such a case.

Risk and opportunity go hand in hand. The balancing policy could lead to a threat from China; meanwhile, it may open opportunities to ensure its security in a broader range with the participation of other great powers.

#### **4. Mongolia's Policy Recommendations**

A strategy of external balancing with other powers is a challenging option for small Mongolia. Within the external balancing strategy, this thesis recommends two levels of policies--general and specific. The general policy is to sustain the current principles of Mongolia's foreign and security policy. The "third neighbor" policy would provide international support for Mongolia and discourage a possible Chinese attack, increasing the cost of aggression. Its policy with neighbors should be reassurance. Russia is an important and powerful balancer in the case of hostile Chinese military or economic action. Mongolia should also assure China that Ulaanbaatar would never threaten Beijing.

Specific policy refers to the religious policy of Mongolia. Inviting the Jebtsundamba as a leader of Mongolian religion would be the best option for the government, thus avoiding recognizing the Dalai Lama and discussing his reincarnation.

*a. Reassurance within the External Balancing*

Mongolia should pursue its current “third neighbor” policy. The “third neighbor” policy would prevent Mongolia from being locked in isolation between Russia and China. Taiwan’s international status leaves it with a limited availability of allies, which leaves no option but reliance on U.S. support. This lesson teaches Ulaanbaatar to take advantage on its sovereignty, and increase and strengthen its alliances. Close alliances with other great powers, such as the United States and India, that can balance both neighbors’ influence in Mongolia, should be a factor for an aggressor to consider. Mongolia’s current effort to join other regional economic and security organizations and dialogues is an important component of its “third neighbor” policy, since such international institutions diminish the return of power and considerably discourage aggressions from China.

The “third neighbor” policy does imply that Mongolia should ignore its immediate neighbors. In geo-strategic terms, Russia is interested in Mongolia as a pivot of the Russo-Chinese balance of power and would likely assist Ulaanbaatar if Moscow viewed this balance as shifting in favor of Beijing. Therefore, Mongolia should reinforce its political and economic ties with Russia to strengthen Moscow’s interest in Ulaanbaatar. .

Reassurance, meanwhile, may be Mongolia’s best policy with China to expose its non-hostile intentions if Beijing finds itself trapped in a Mongolia-Tibet-Taiwan concern. Ulaanbaatar has already met the reality of economic dependence on China and has developed no plan to break away from such dependence. It should take advantage of this situation, since redirecting its economic trend is unaffordable even for Taiwan, a powerful regional economy. Furthermore, dependence would assure Beijing that Mongolia would never threaten China and, in turn, it may also change the PRC’s coercive policy in the case of the Dalai Lama’s reincarnation in Mongolia.

Mongolia's observance of secular principles of governance should be consistent for China's sake. Taiwan's independence claim has been seen a unilateral change of the *status quo* in the Taiwan Strait and every country has had to adjust to this change. China, in turn, has affirmed its commitment to war with the Anti-Secession Law, and the United States sees Taipei as a source of instability in the Strait. Ulaanbaatar's support of the Dalai Lama's reincarnation in Mongolia should be seen as predictable, consistent and non-threatening in eyes of the international community, including the Chinese, if the country has persistently observed its commitment to democracy, government responsiveness, human rights and secular principle.

***b. Religious Administration Separate from Politics***

Mongolia needs an institution that has the authority to recognize the Dalai Lama's next reincarnation and would liberate the government from recognizing the reincarnation of the next Dalai Lama. The last section discusses both conservative and radical options, and suggests the former.

The conservative option is inviting the Jebtsundamba and putting him in charge of religious issues, including the recognition of the next Dalai Lama. On the one hand, the religious needs of the Mongolian electorate would be satisfied. On the other hand, the Jebtsundamba would relieve the government of the huge task of recognizing the Dalai Lama's reincarnation, which could lead down a collision course with China. Ulaanbaatar should simply accept the Jebtsundamba's rule over such a reincarnation, since he would be the national religious leader.

Supporting the Dalai Lama and making him the paramount leader of all world Buddhists is the most radical option. The Tibetan government-in-exile could name a child in the territory of Mongolia the reincarnation of the Dalai Lama, and Mongolian monasteries could support him as the true one, opposing one who would be found in China and recognized by Beijing. The government of Mongolia should emphasize the religious role of the Dalai Lama as it does today, rather than his political activities. That would be seen as consistent with Mongolia's current religious policy, and not a sudden hostile change of foreign policy with Beijing.

The radical policy to make the Dalai Lama the paramount leader of all Buddhists, however, has some disadvantages. First, it lacks historic rationale, and thus has less legitimacy. Second, supporting the Dalai Lama alone would appear as denouncing the Jebtsundamba, which would be problematic for Mongolians. Third, the government of Mongolia would be directly obliged to comment as to why Mongolia supported the Dalai Lama born in Mongolia, and not the Dalai Lama born in China, whom the Chinese government believes to be the true one. It would lead Ulaanbaatar to a direct confrontation with Beijing.

Mongolian monasteries still lack strong religious leadership following the long communist oppression.<sup>237</sup> As an institution, the monasteries are doubtful whether they can relieve the government from recognizing the Dalai Lama. The 9<sup>th</sup> Jebtsundamba has attempted to resolve the institutional problem derived from spontaneous salience by establishing his Religious Assembly and Administration during his short visit to Mongolia.<sup>238</sup> Inviting the Jebtsundamba, therefore, would be the best choice for Mongolia. It would have full historical legitimacy, would be appropriate for national identity, and would save the government of Mongolia from a direct confrontation with China, meanwhile, keeping it in the center of attention of the international community.

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<sup>237</sup> Ajaa Rinpoche in discussion.

<sup>238</sup> Bold, in discussion.

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